

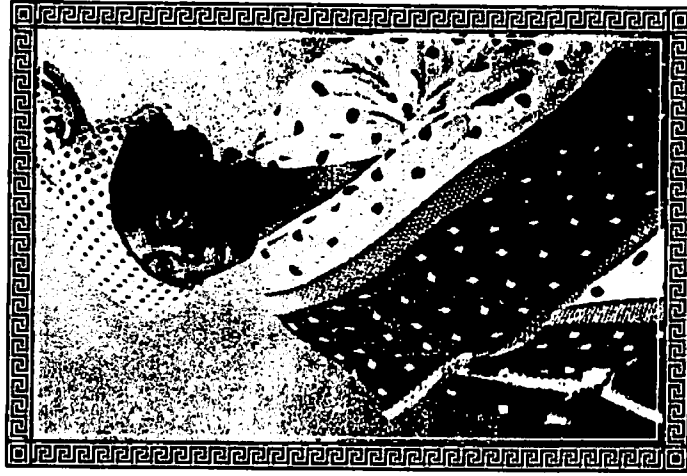
Modern day kangas all over Africa and nearby countries often have certain specially printed designs with commemorative, educational or political themes. This makes each one more special but also benefits by the design being positioned so that it can be "read". These kangas then become – when worn – like moving posters "advertising" a theme, person, political party, religion, or event. Many aid agencies, political and religious organizations have used kangas to promote their viewpoints!

Early in the twentieth century, Swahili sayings were added to some kangas. Allegedly this fashion was started by a locally famous trader in Mombasa who often included a proverb. Another legend says that sayings were started in Zanzibar. At first, the sayings, aphorisms or slogans were printed in Arabic script, later in Roman letters. Many of them have the added charm (or frustration!) of being obscure or ambiguous in their meaning. If you find a motto that you can't figure out, ask several different Swahili speakers. You will get an equal number of different explanations! Some typical kanga sayings are listed on the following pages, for your edification and enjoyment.



New kanga designs keep appearing in great variety – simple or intricate abstract patterns; homely themes such as chickens, crops, babies and fertility; pictures of famous attractions like mountains, monuments and wildlife; even pop stars! There are noticeable regional differences. For example, most of the kangas with slogans, sayings and mottos are made in Kenya, while those commemorating social or political events are more common in Tanzania and southern Africa. The social uses of kangas are changing with the times.

The Kanga is still evolving. Like the T-shirt, but incomparably more elegant and useful, it is a valuable medium for personal, political, social and religious expression. As an art form as well as a convenient garment, the kanga has become an integral part of African culture. As the saying goes, "The kanga struts in style..." Wear it with a smile!



*A lovely Zanzibar woman wearing kangas.
Photographed by J.B. Coutinho in 1890.*

KANGA SAYINGS

USINISUMBUE

Don't bother me!

ADUI MPENDE

Love your enemy

AKILI NI MALI

Wits are wealth

NJIA MWONGO FUPI

The way of the liar is short

VIDOLE VITANO - KIFI NI BORA?

Of five fingers, which one is the best?

RADHI NI BORA KULIKO MALI

A kanga with this inscription was stolen from the author by Fifi, a wild chimpanzee in the Gombe National Park. It was shredded, sucked, and dropped bit by bit into a nest of safari ants. The motto seemed appropriate:

"Blessings are better than possessions"



MTAKA YOTE HUKOSA YOTE

One who wants all, usually loses all

KUPATA SI KWA WEREVU, NA KUKOSA SI UJINGA

Getting is not cleverness, lacking is not stupidity

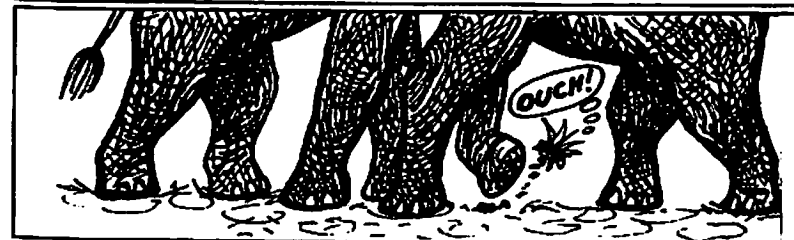
KULEYA MIMBA SI KAZI - KAZI NI KULEYA MWANA



KUELEKEZA SI KUFUMA

To aim is not to hit

NDOVU WAWILI WAKISONGANA, ZIUMIAZO NI NYASI

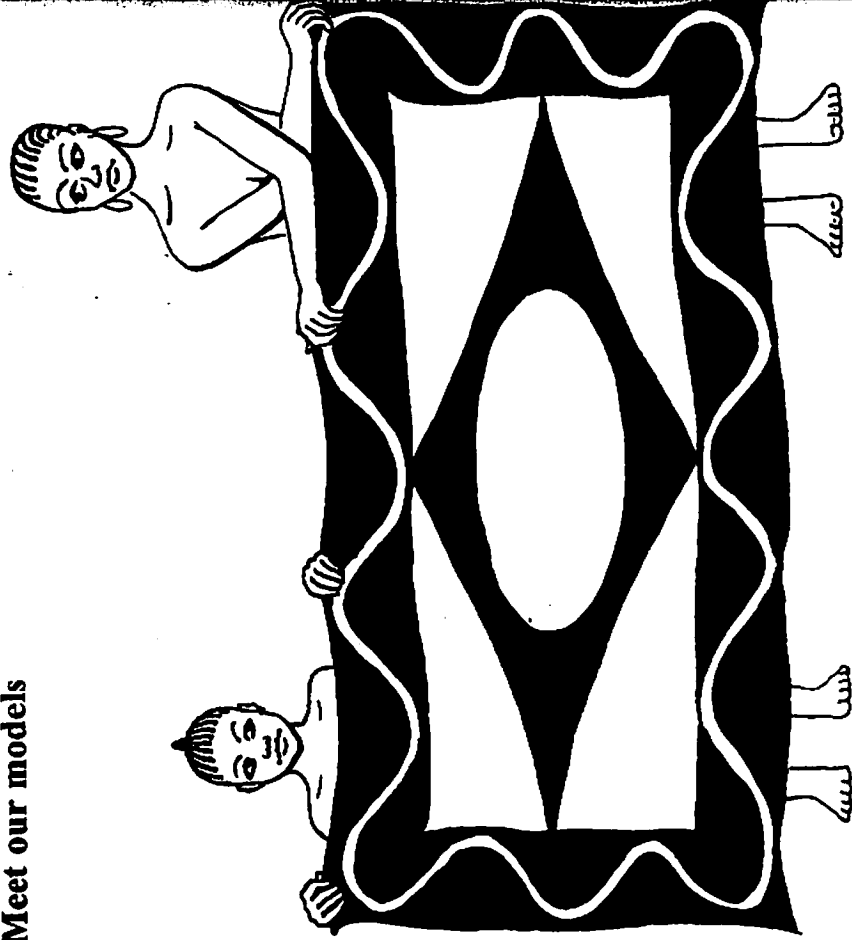


When two elephants fight, it's the grass that gets hurt

KANGA NENDA NA UREMBO, SHANI UREMBO NA SHANI

The kanga struts in style - surprisingly stylish and smart

Meet our models



Let us introduce our two kanga "models" - Rehema and Celestiana.

Celestiana is the aspiring fashion model, tall and elegant. Rehema is more down-to-earth, short and sturdy. We intended that they could illustrate which clothing styles look best on which figure. But Rehema and Celestiana gradually took over from us and developed personalities of their own!

In the first half of this book, they show you how to wear kangas. The second half is about other uses.

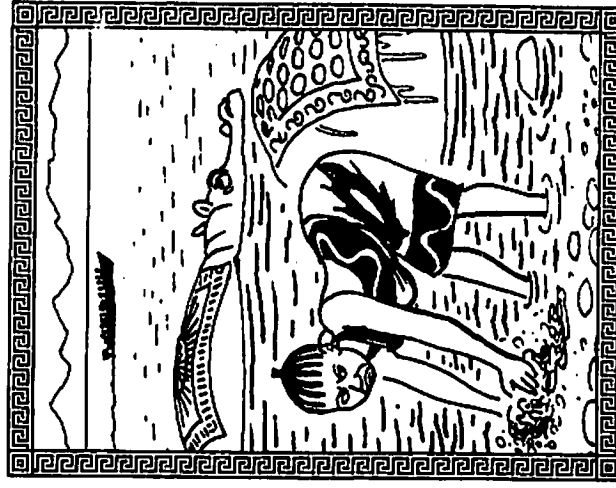
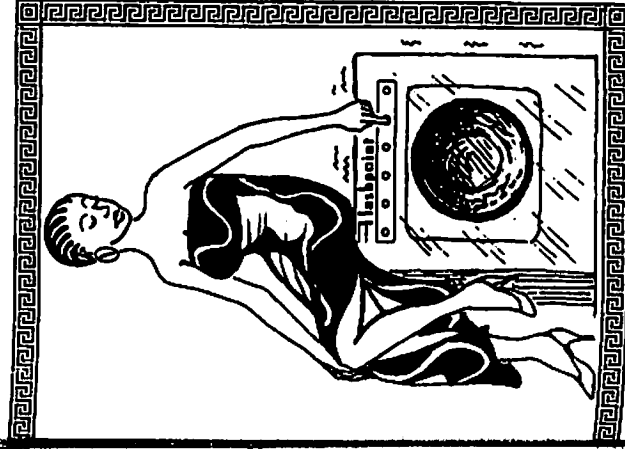
There are three basic principles for all uses:

Wearing and caring for kangas

ORIENTATION: Rehema and Celestiana are here shown holding a side of a kanga. For some styles, you start by holding an end. The correct orientation is shown in the first drawing of each sequence, and you are also shown how to fold or roll the kanga.

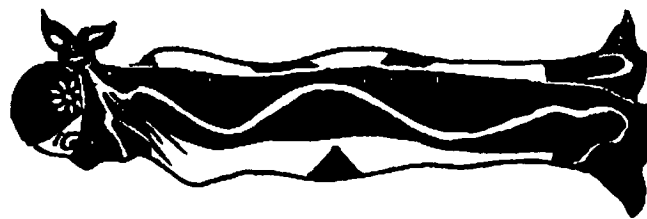
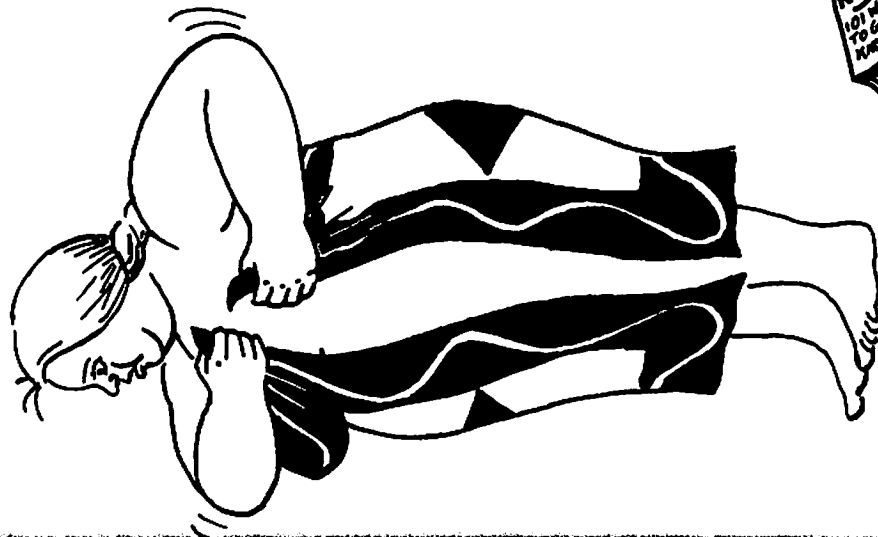
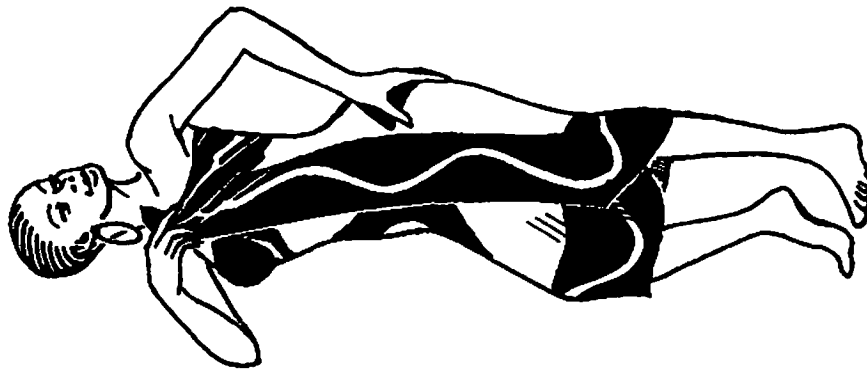
ADJUSTMENTS: The arrowed stages in each sequence of drawings would lead to a functional outfit. But take the time to knot, fold, gather, tuck or tuck the kanga as necessary. This will ensure that they won't fall off, and lets you display the kanga's pattern (or contents) in the most pleasing way.

SIMPLICITY: All the styles and uses require only one or two intact kangas. Apart from hemming they are not sewn, cut, buttoned, zipped or otherwise mutilated. Sometimes a pin is useful for extra security, but the challenge and reward of using kangas is to keep them simple and perfect. Kangas are the easiest clothes to care for. Just wash them, then rinse thoroughly (to protect colours, and your skin) and hang up wet. They will dry in a very short time.



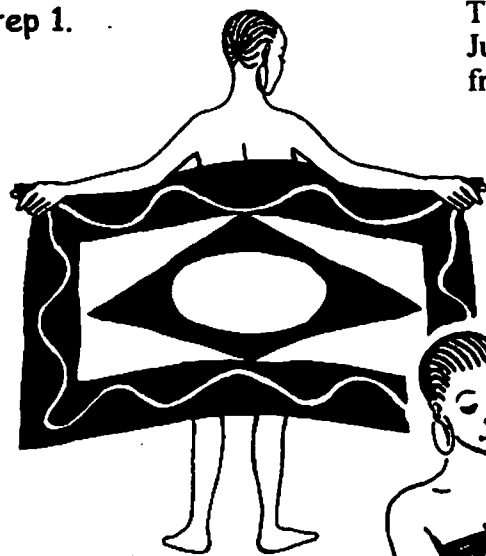
If you aren't Celestiana, don't give up!

One of the clothing styles may not suit you; it depends on your taste as well as your size and shape. Try them all; tall or short, young or old, fat or thin, you're sure to find some styles which really look and feel GOOD!



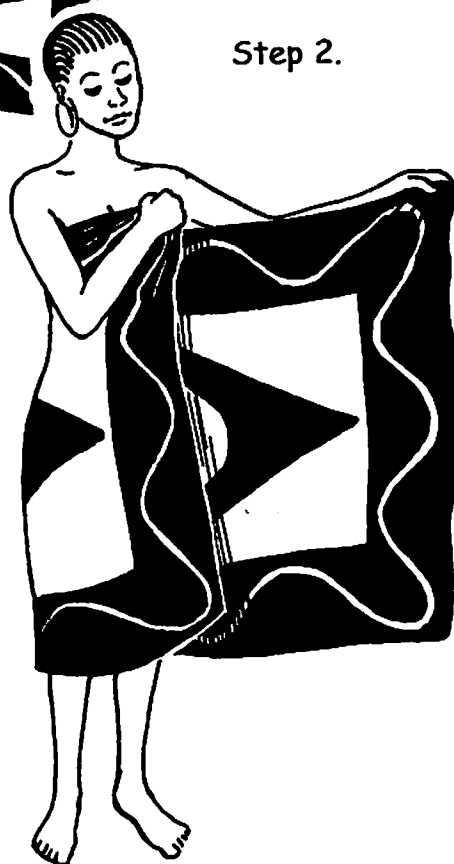
1. Traditional Dress

Step 1.



The simplest style of all.
Just follow the arrows
from step to step...

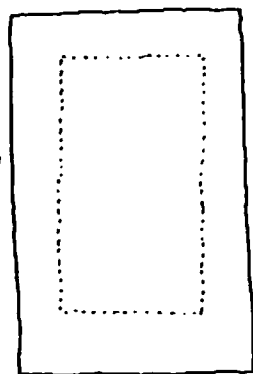
Step 2.



NB: Note our
terminology:

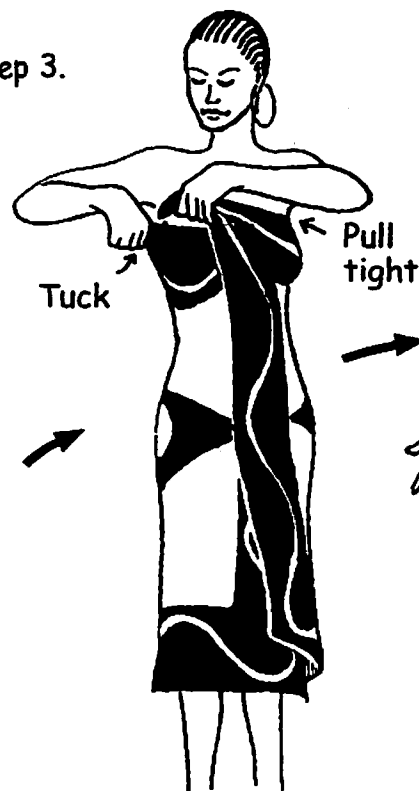
"END"

"SIDE"

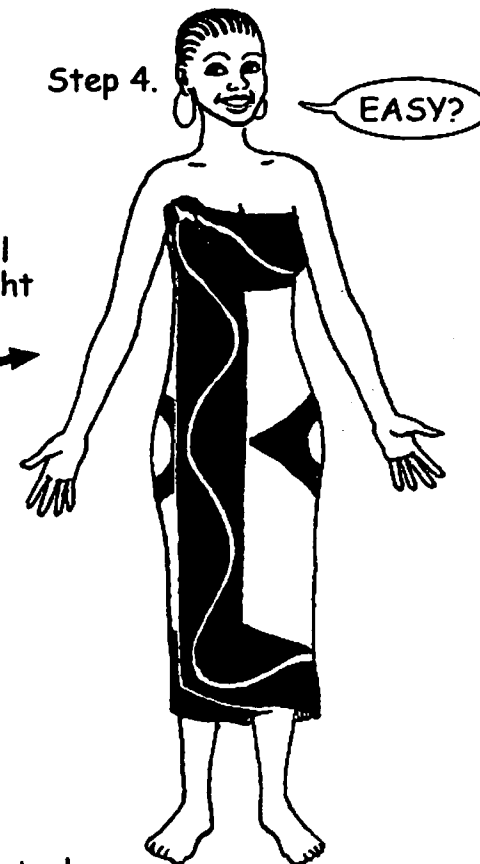


"CORNER"

Step 3.

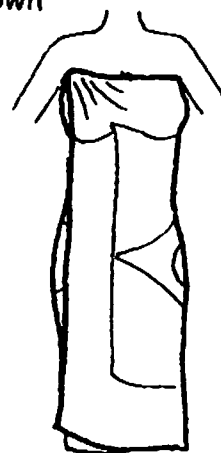


Step 4.



Variations:

a) Side tuck -
is shown
above



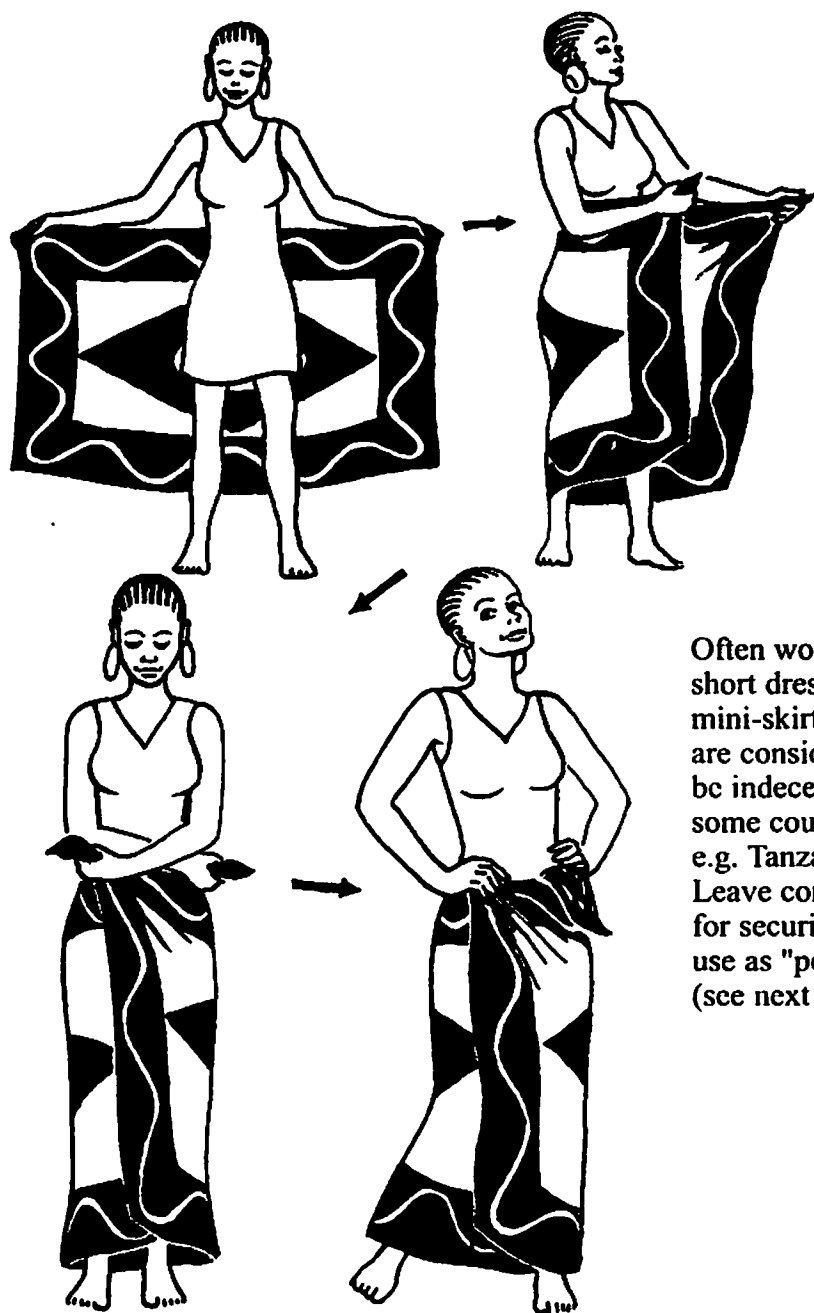
b) Side tuck
with corner out
(most
secure)



c) Center
tuck



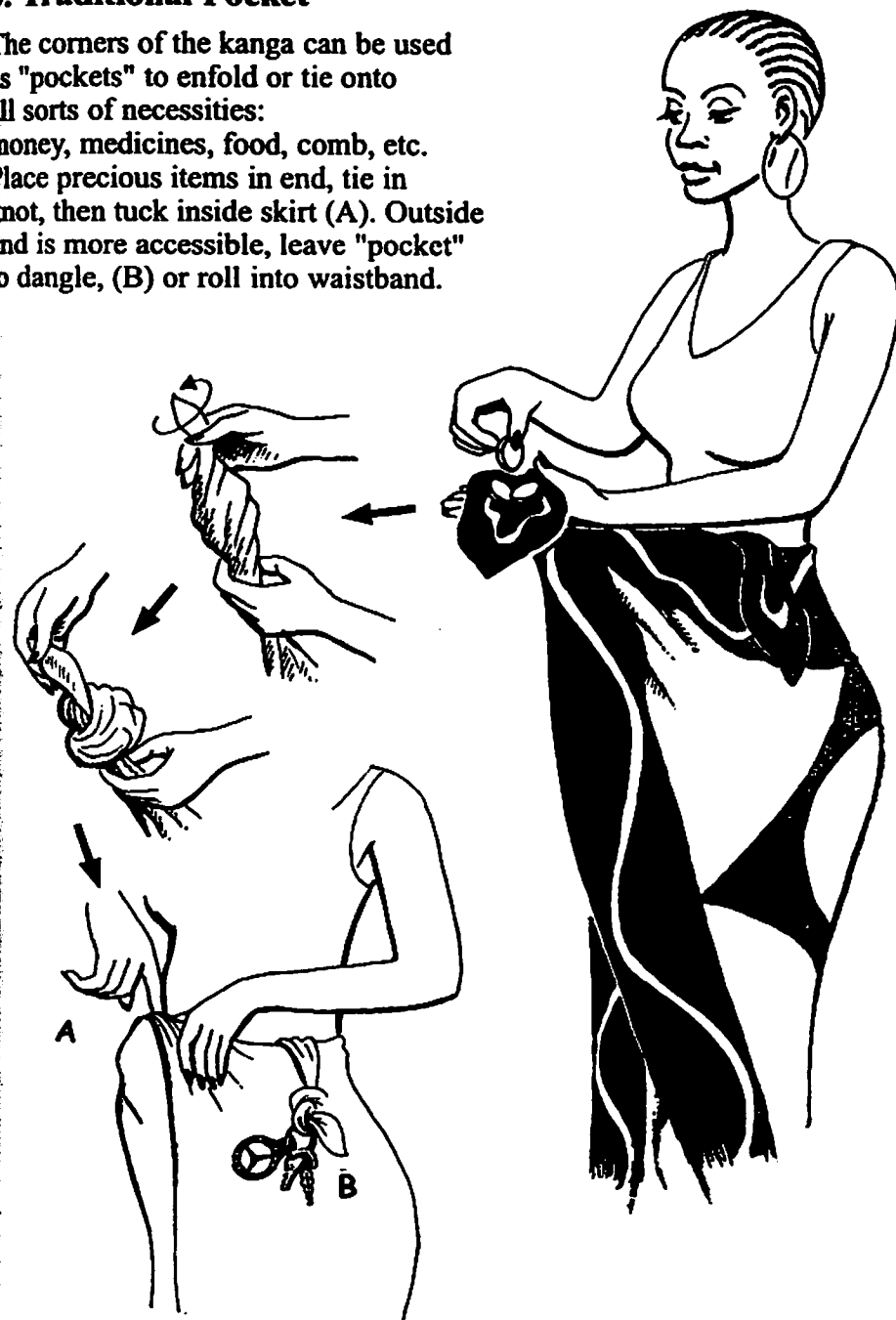
2. Traditional Skirt



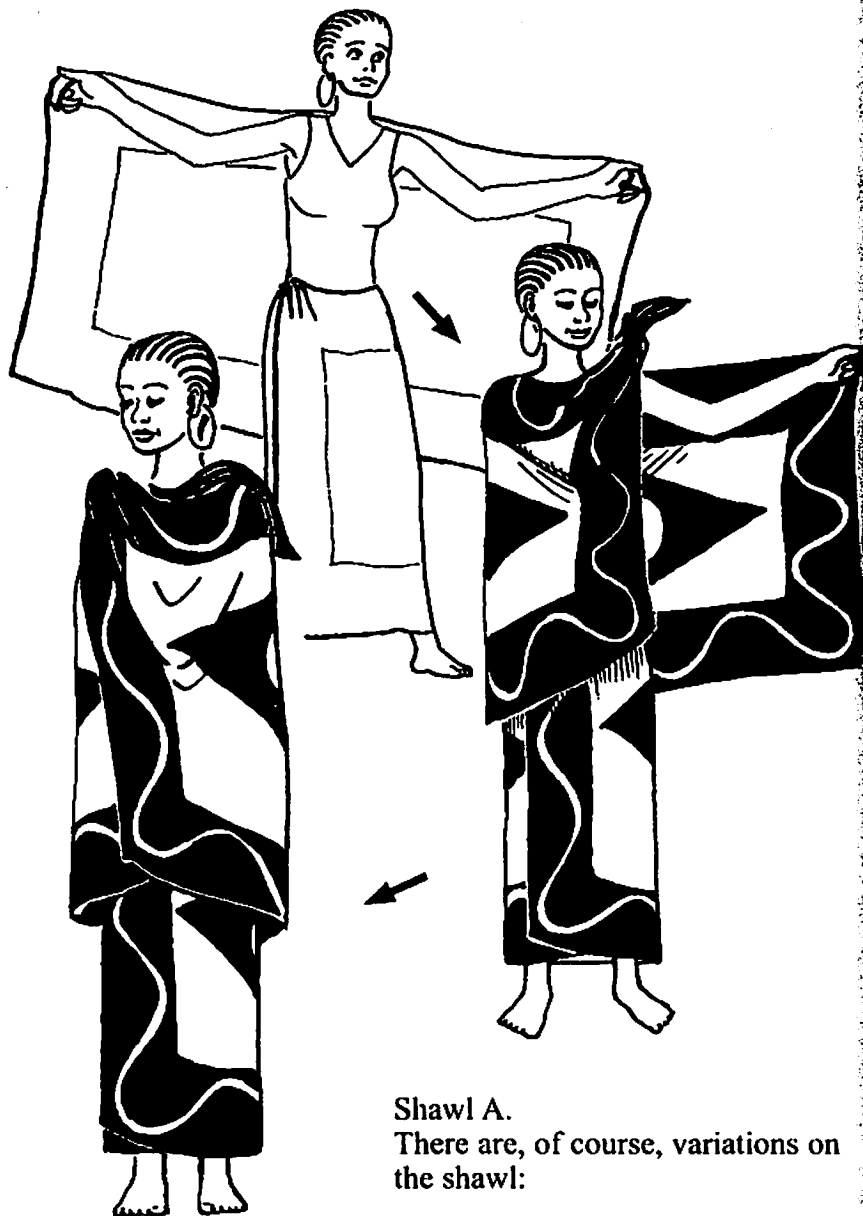
Often worn over short dresses or mini-skirts (which are considered to be indecent in some countries, e.g. Tanzania) Leave corner out for security and use as "pocket" (see next page).

3. Traditional Pocket

The corners of the kanga can be used as "pockets" to enfold or tie onto all sorts of necessities: money, medicines, food, comb, etc. Place precious items in end, tie in knot, then tuck inside skirt (A). Outside end is more accessible, leave "pocket" to dangle, (B) or roll into waistband.



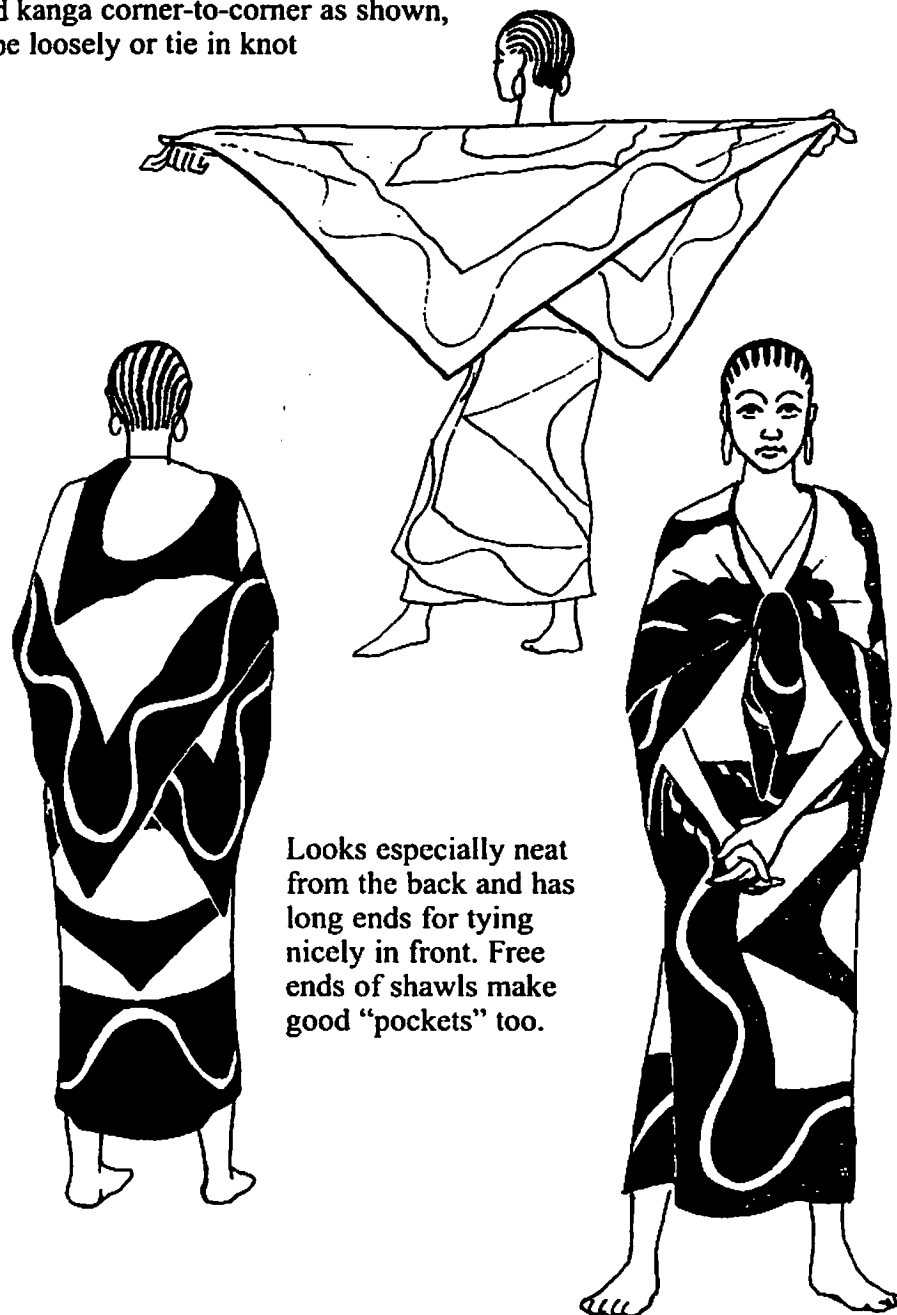
4. Traditional Shawl I: Shoulders



Shawl A.
There are, of course, variations on the shawl:

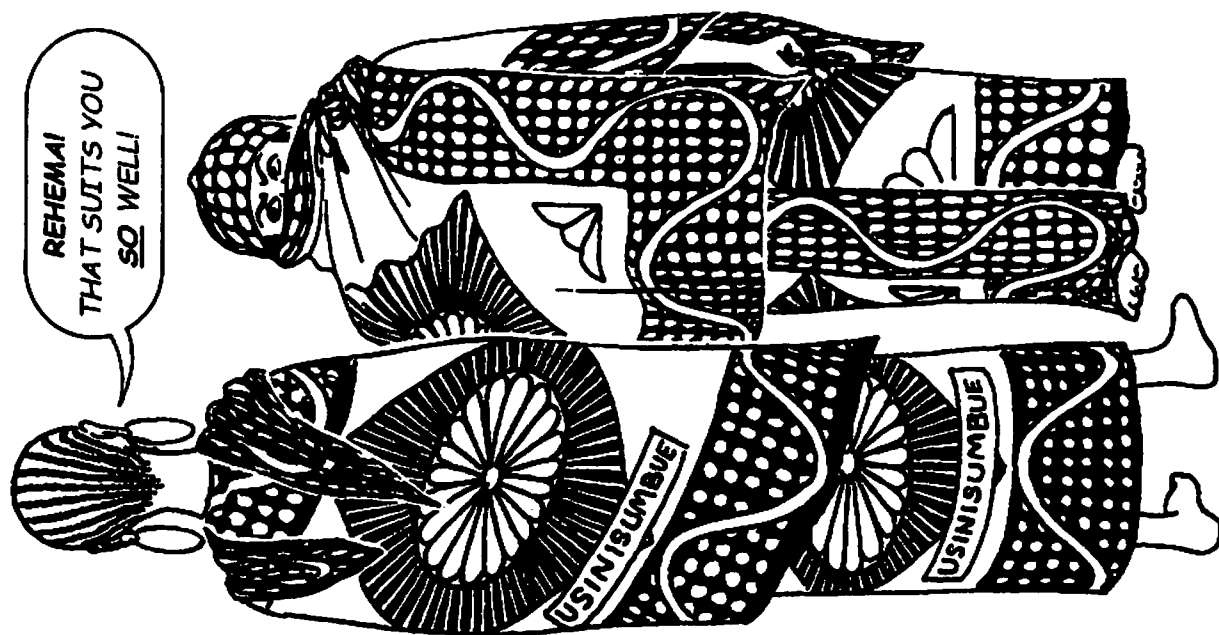
Shawl B.

Fold kanga corner-to-corner as shown,
drape loosely or tie in knot



Looks especially neat
from the back and has
long ends for tying
nicely in front. Free
ends of shawls make
good "pockets" too.

5. Traditional Shawl 2: Head



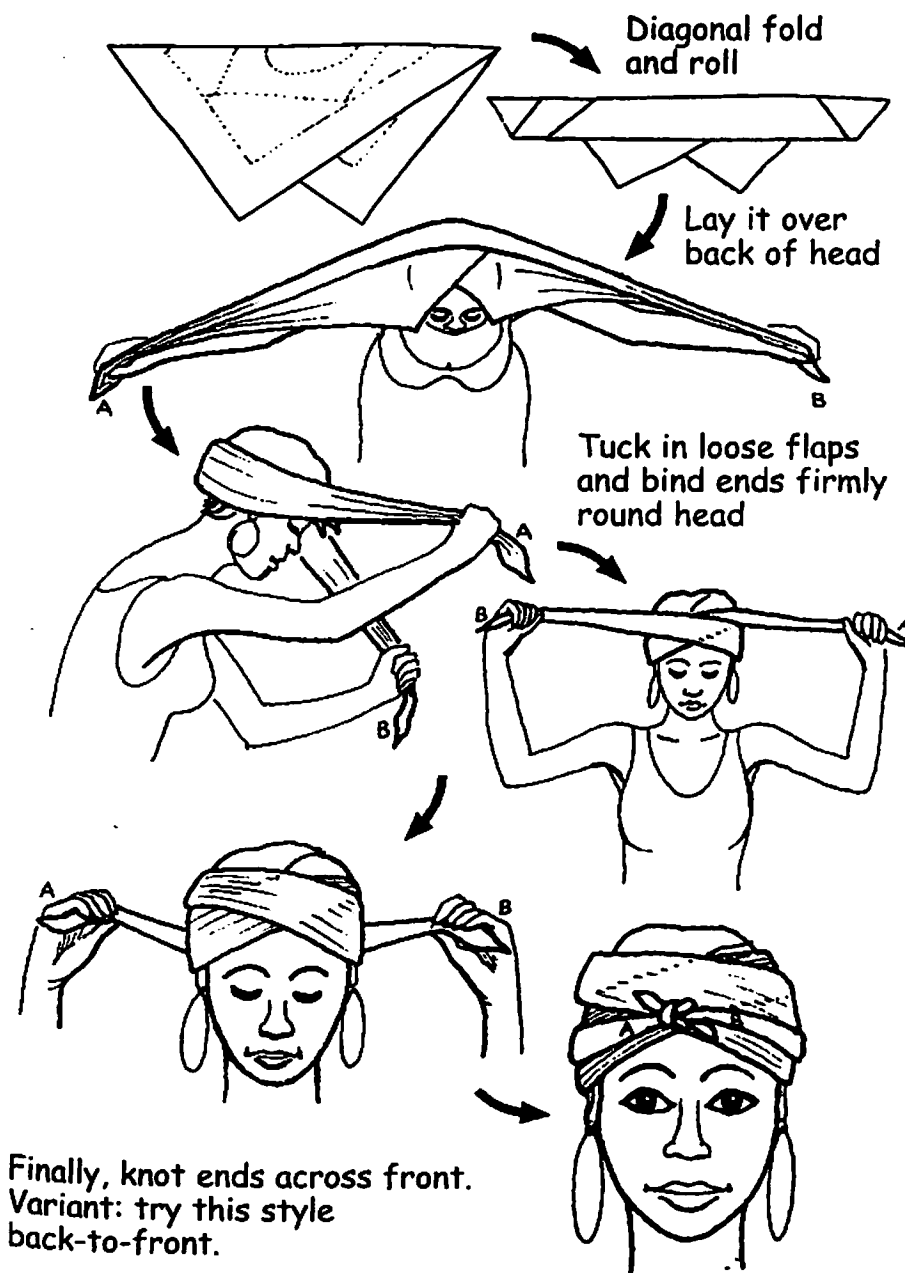
Celestiana in (2) & (4A); Rehema in (2) & (5)

6. Traditional Dance Costume



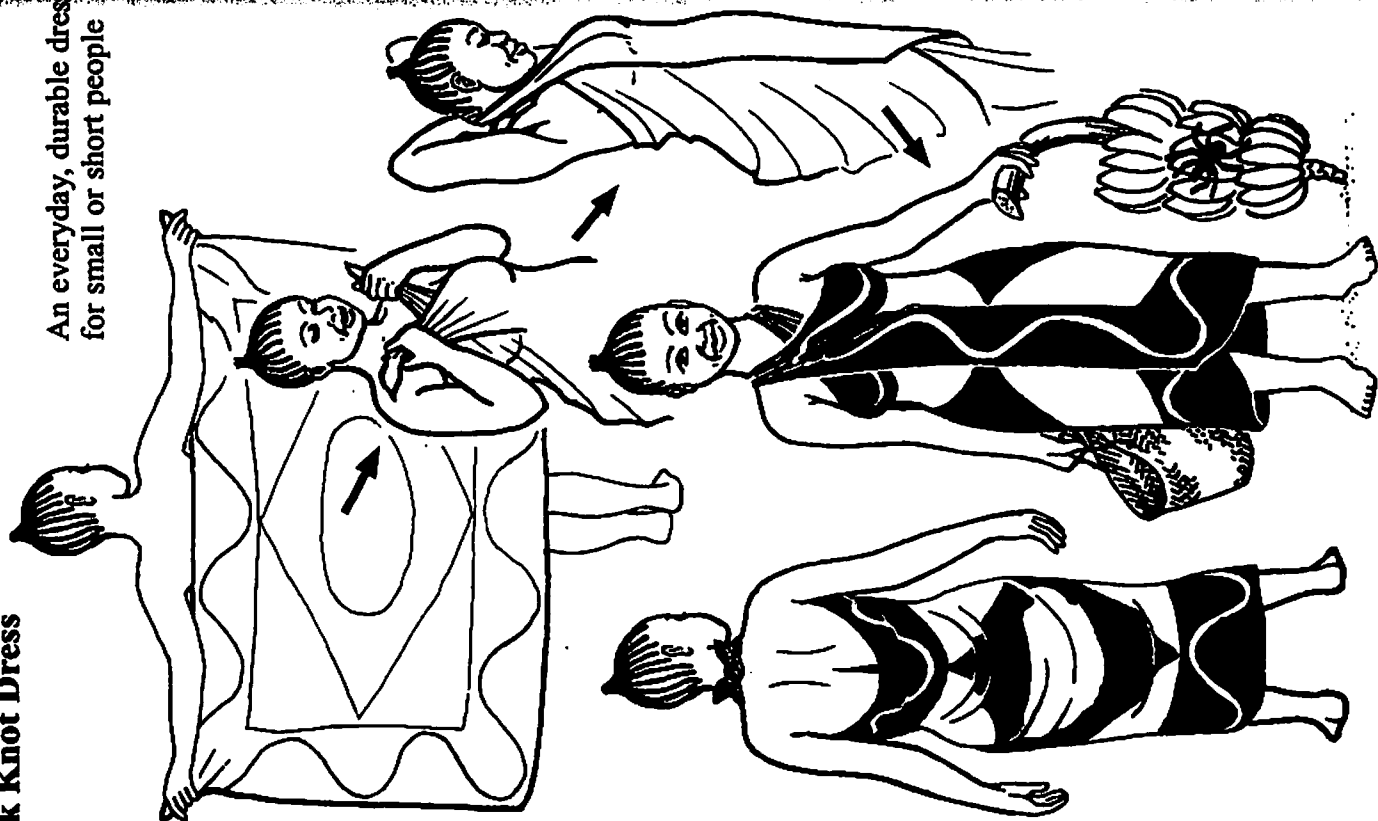
One of many variants. This uses 3 pieces:
Top as in style (35),
Skirt style (2) gathered at waist,
Third kanga as belt to hold skirt on.

7. Traditional Headpiece

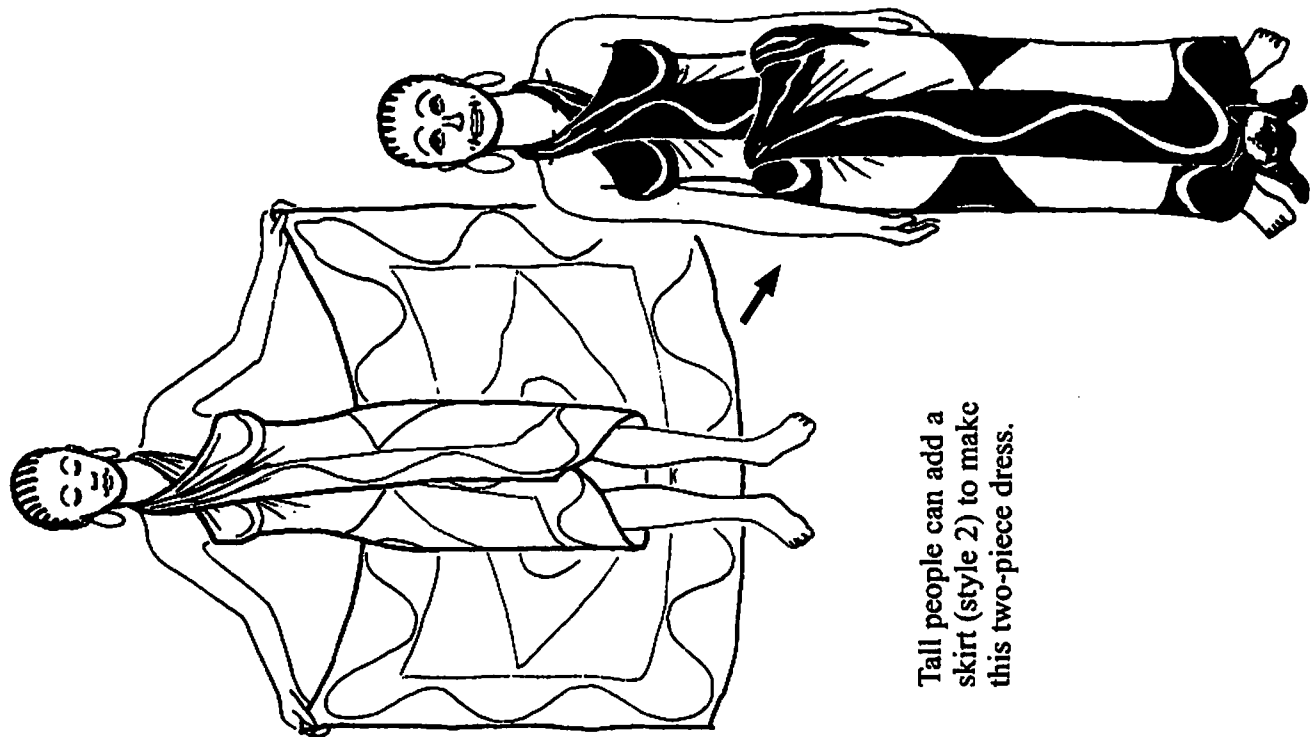


9. Neck Knot Dress

An everyday, durable dress for small or short people



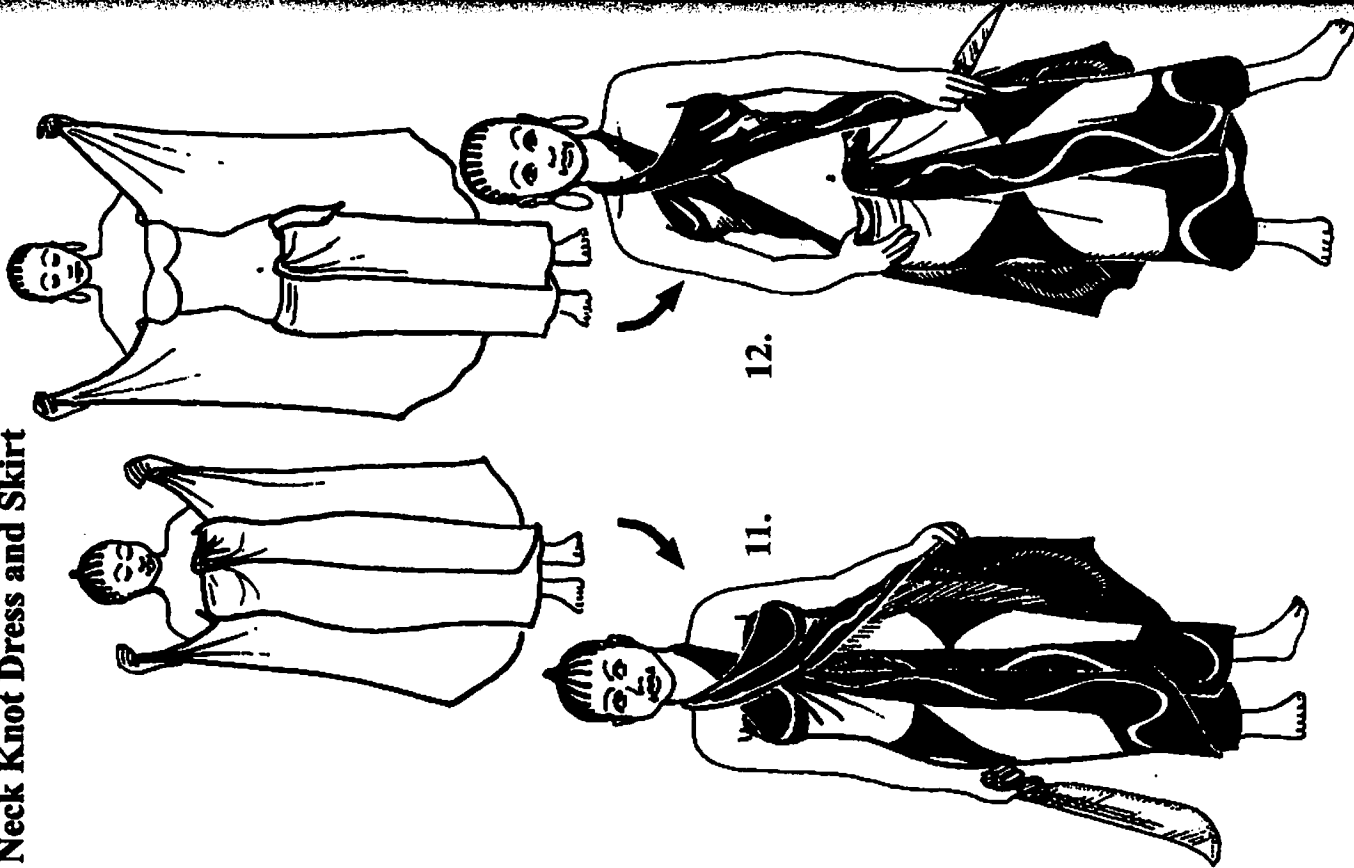
9. Neck Knot Dress and Overskirt



Tall people can add a skirt (style 2) to make this two-piece dress.

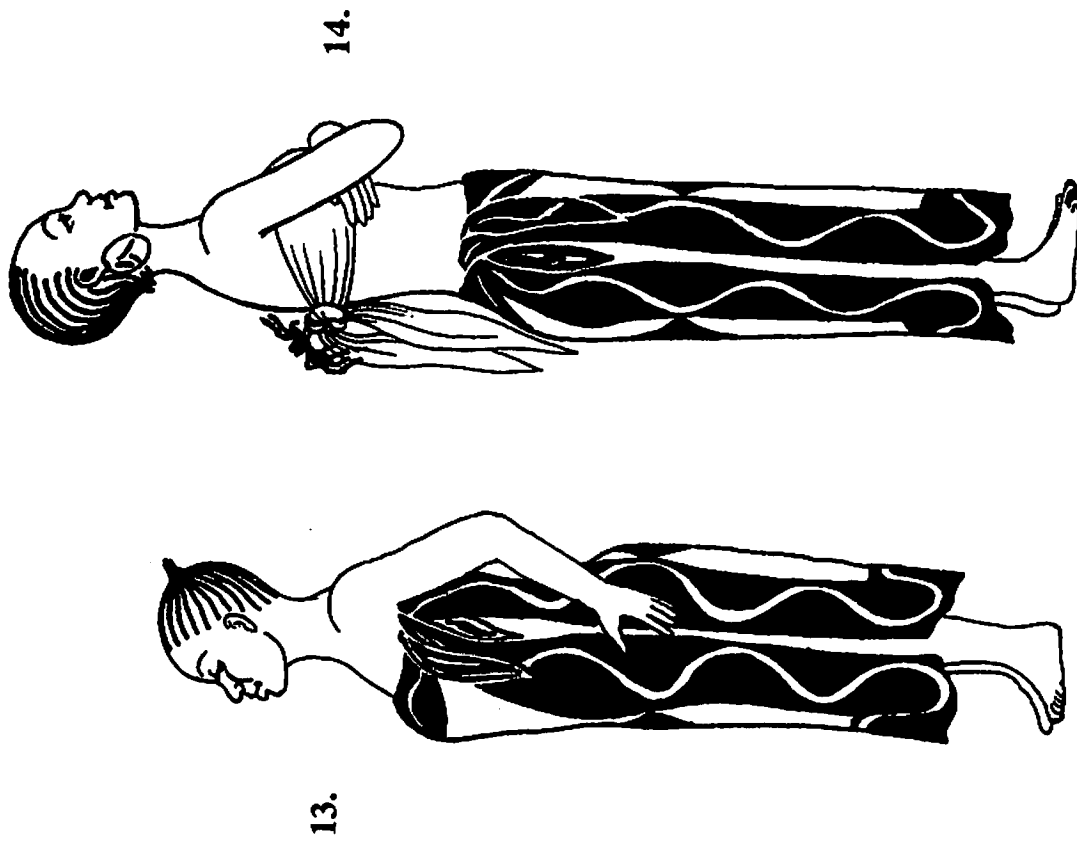
11. Neck Knot Dress and Shift

12. Neck Knot Dress and Skirt



Side Tie Shift

Side Tie Skirt

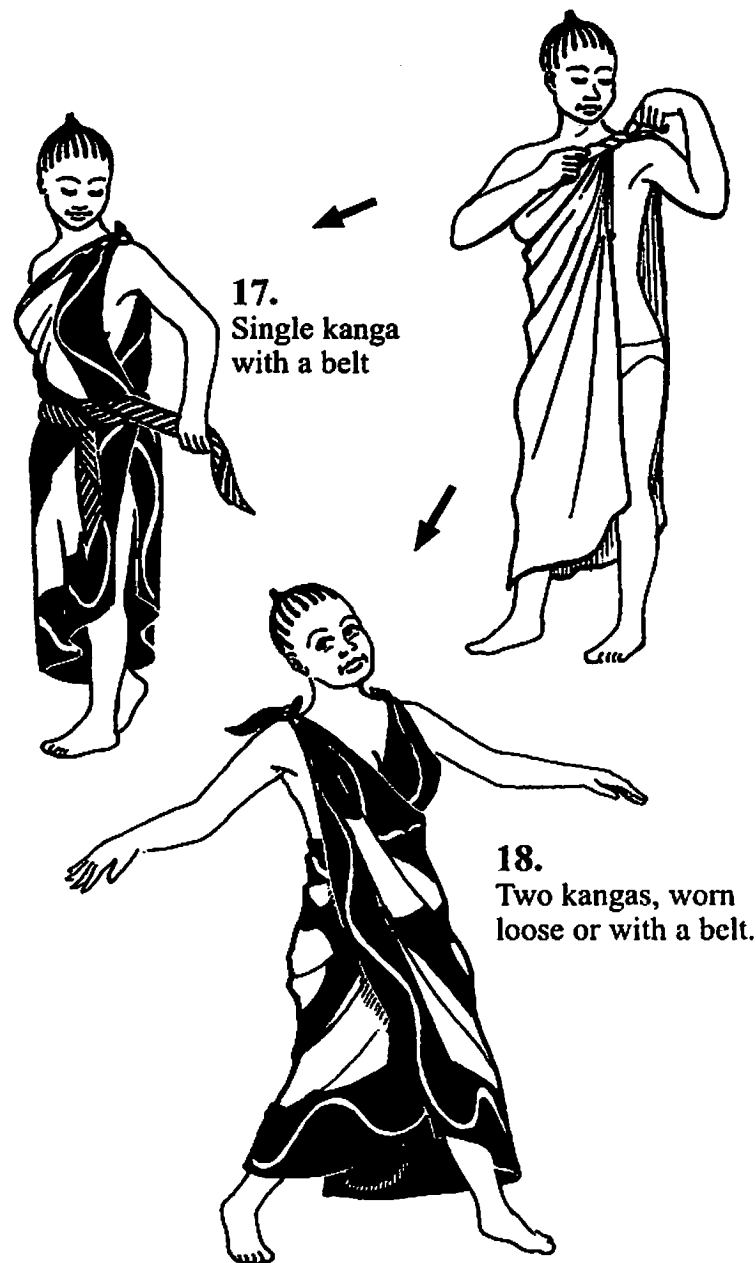


15. Shoulder-Knot Basic Dress
16. Basic Dress and Overskirt

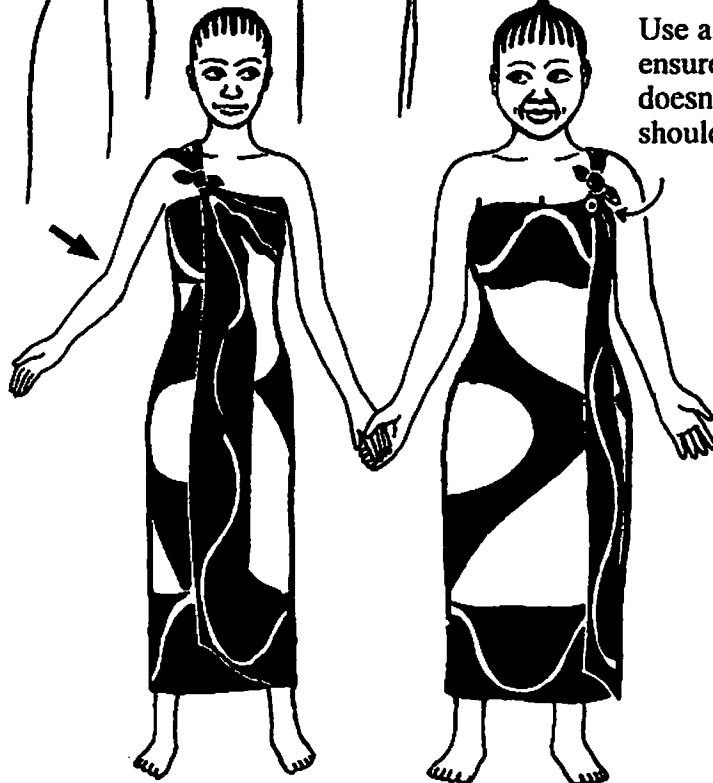
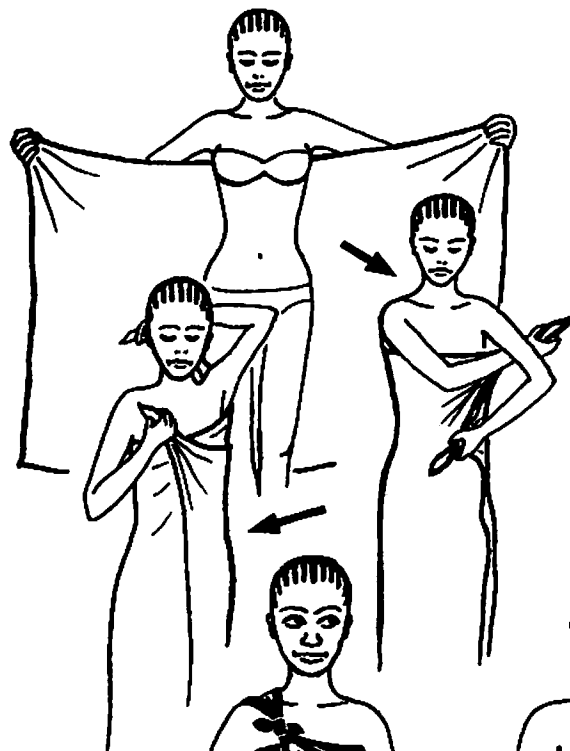
A basic dress for all occasions:
 Tie tip of kanga end to side with
 square knot over both shoulders.
 Cross in front and wear belt for
 short dress (15) or add a matching
 kanga for long dress (16).
 Leave loose for sleeveless
 jacket or cape.



17. Single Shoulder-Knot Belted Dress
18. Double Shoulder-Knot Dress



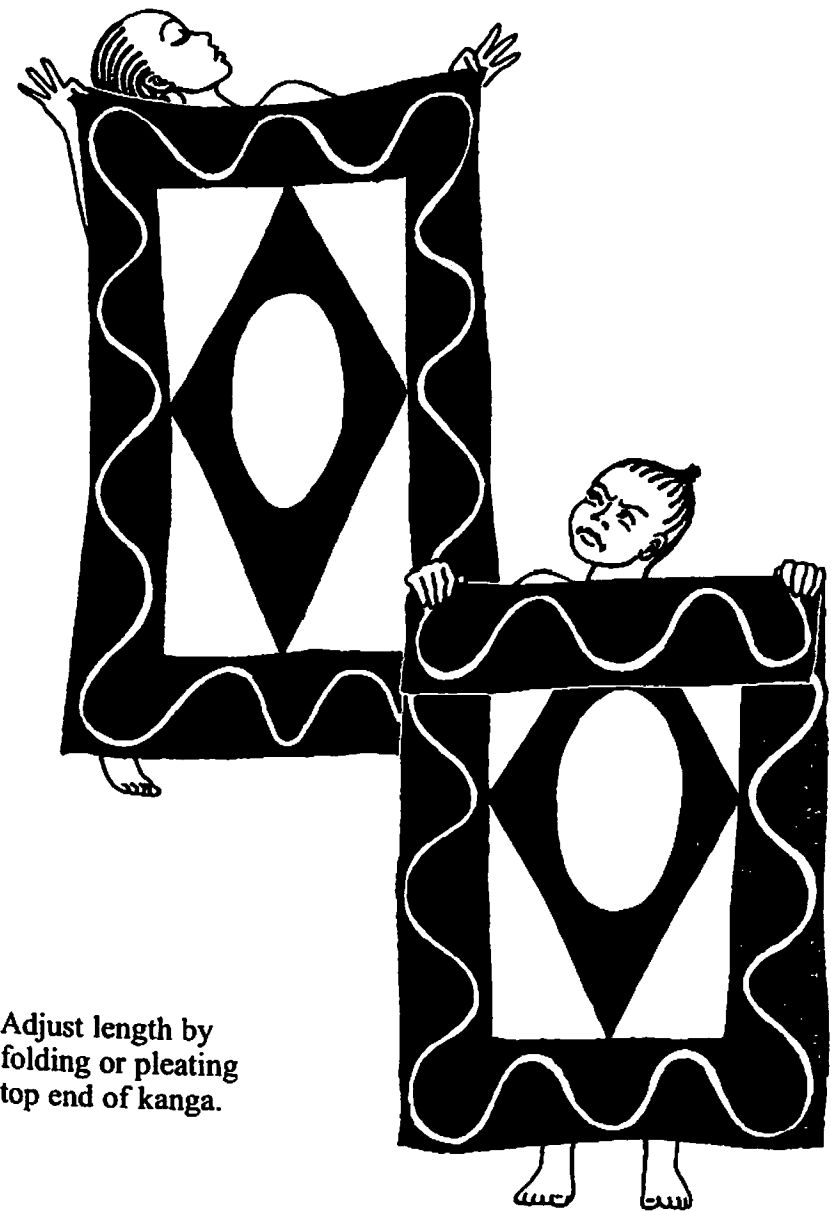
19. Criss-cross Dress: Front knot (for small people)



20. Same, with shoulder knot

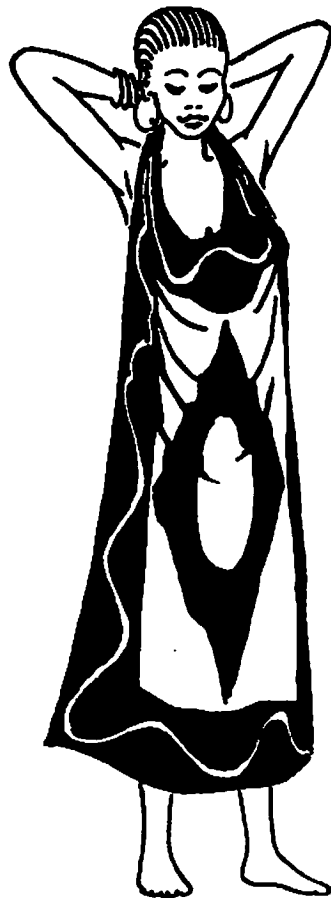
Use a pin to ensure knot doesn't slip off shoulder

"Take an End..."- Lengthwise styles 21-34

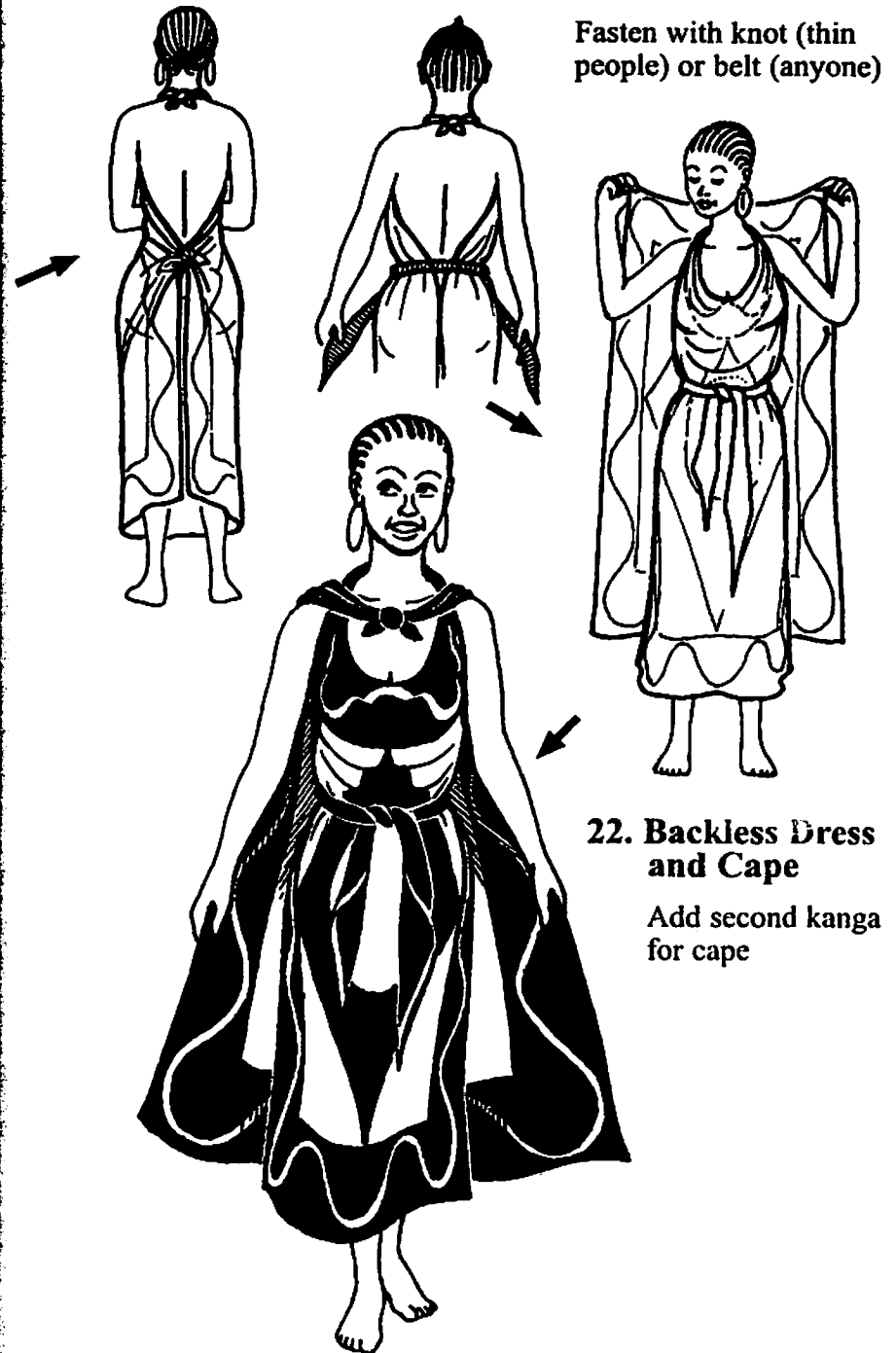
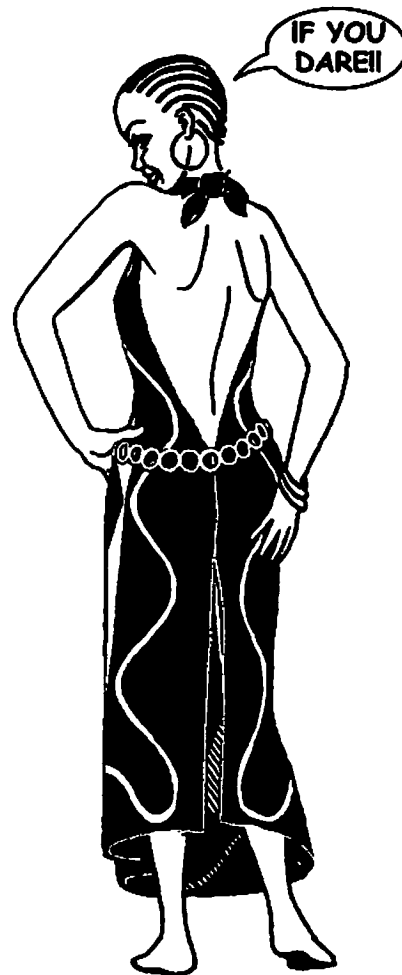


Adjust length by folding or pleating top end of kanga.

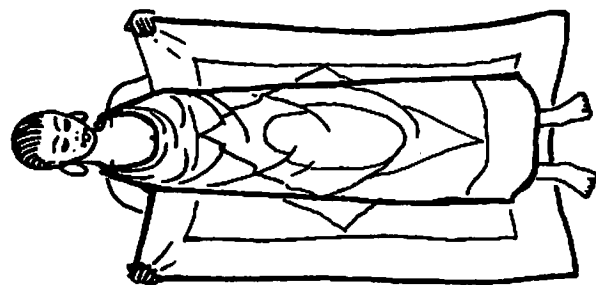
21. Backless Dress - Knot or belt



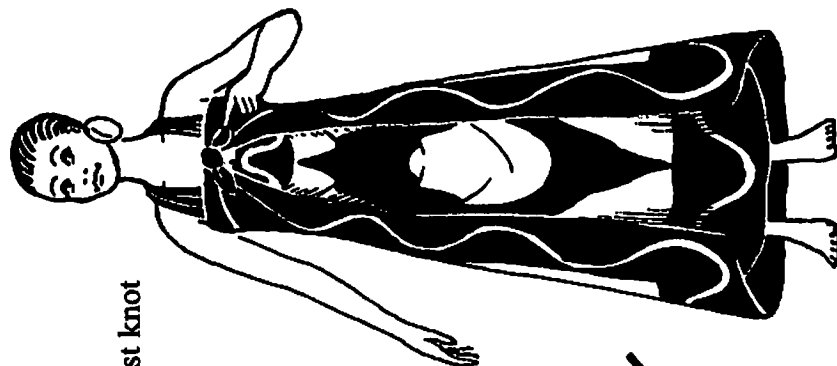
Also makes excellent
full-length apron



23. Long Dress I



Breast knot

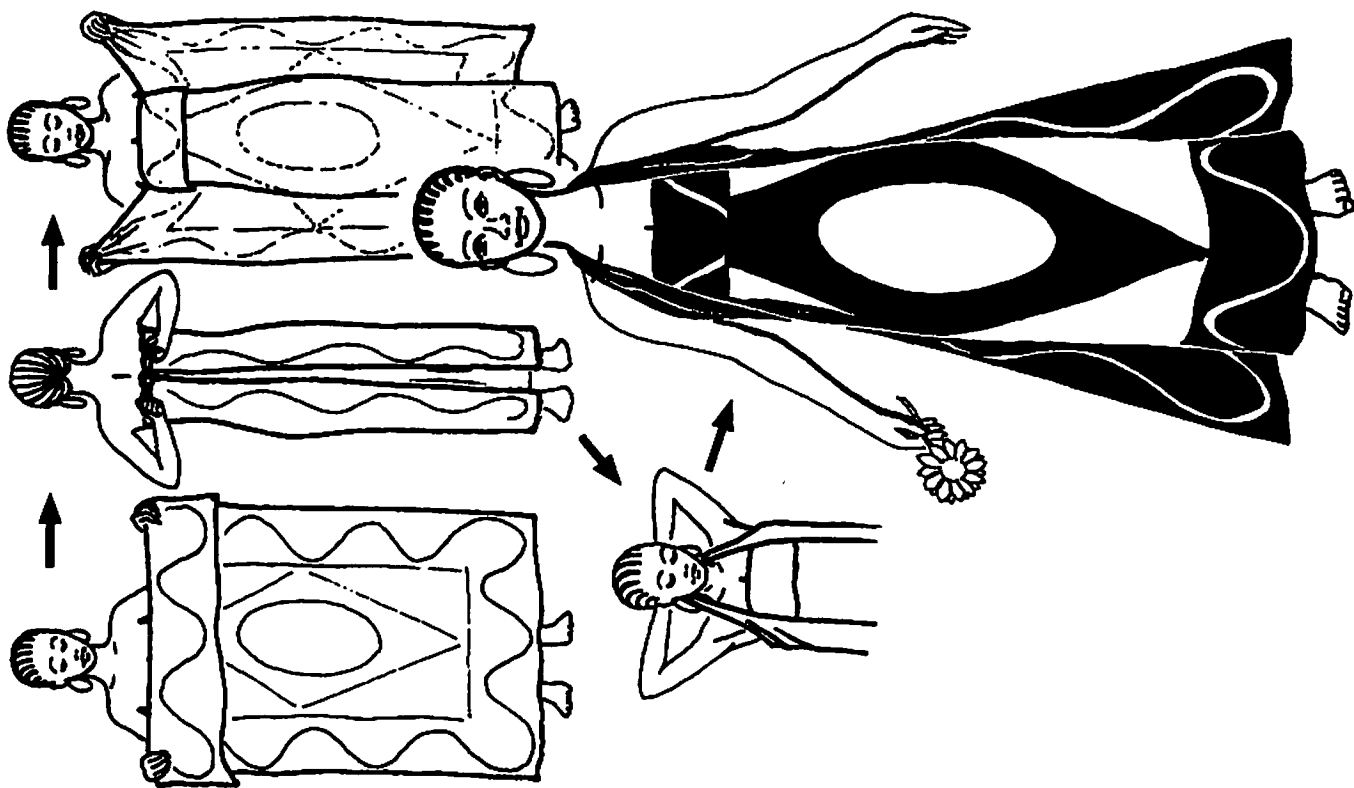


24. Long Dress II Behind-neck knot



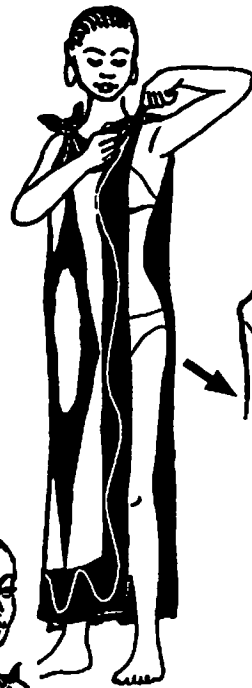
42

Elegant Dress

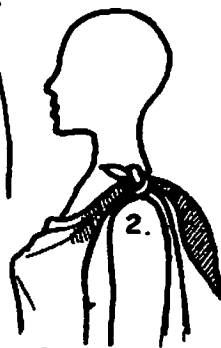


43

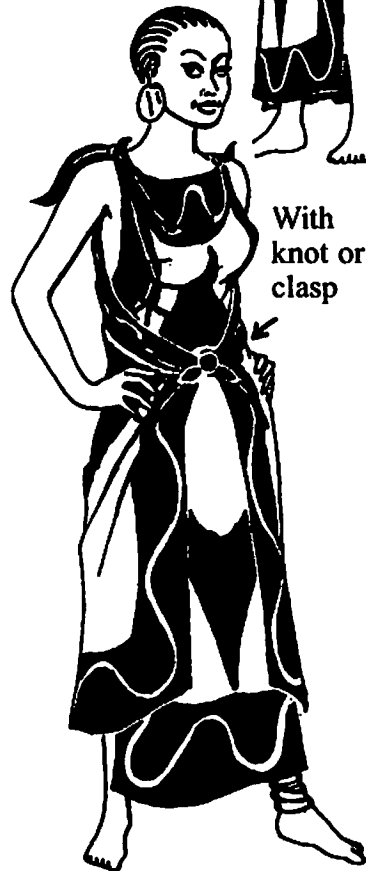
TOGAS



Two kinds of
shoulder ties:
1. Square knot
2. Slip knot

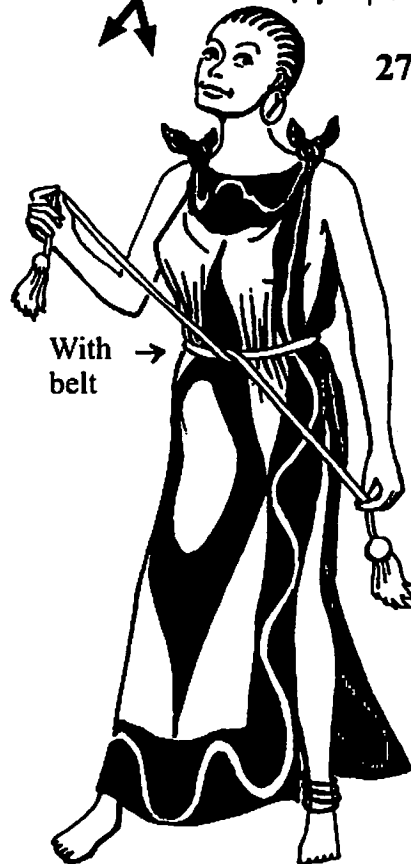


26. Toga I

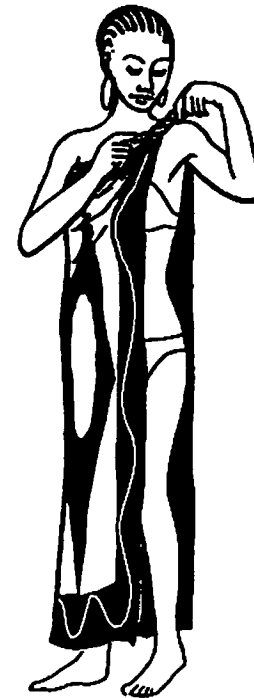


With
knot or
clasp

27. Toga



With
belt



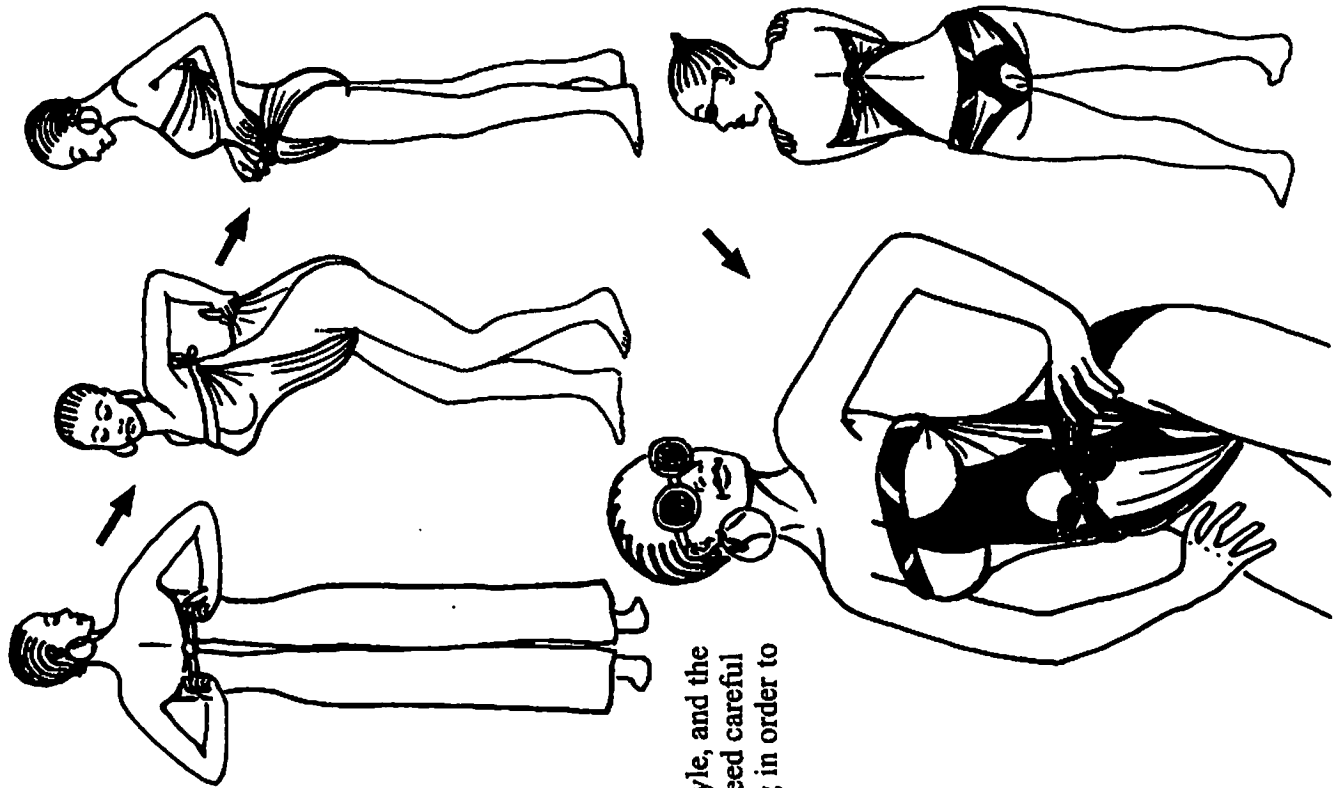
28. Toga III

Knot one kanga over
each shoulder. A good
style for taller people.



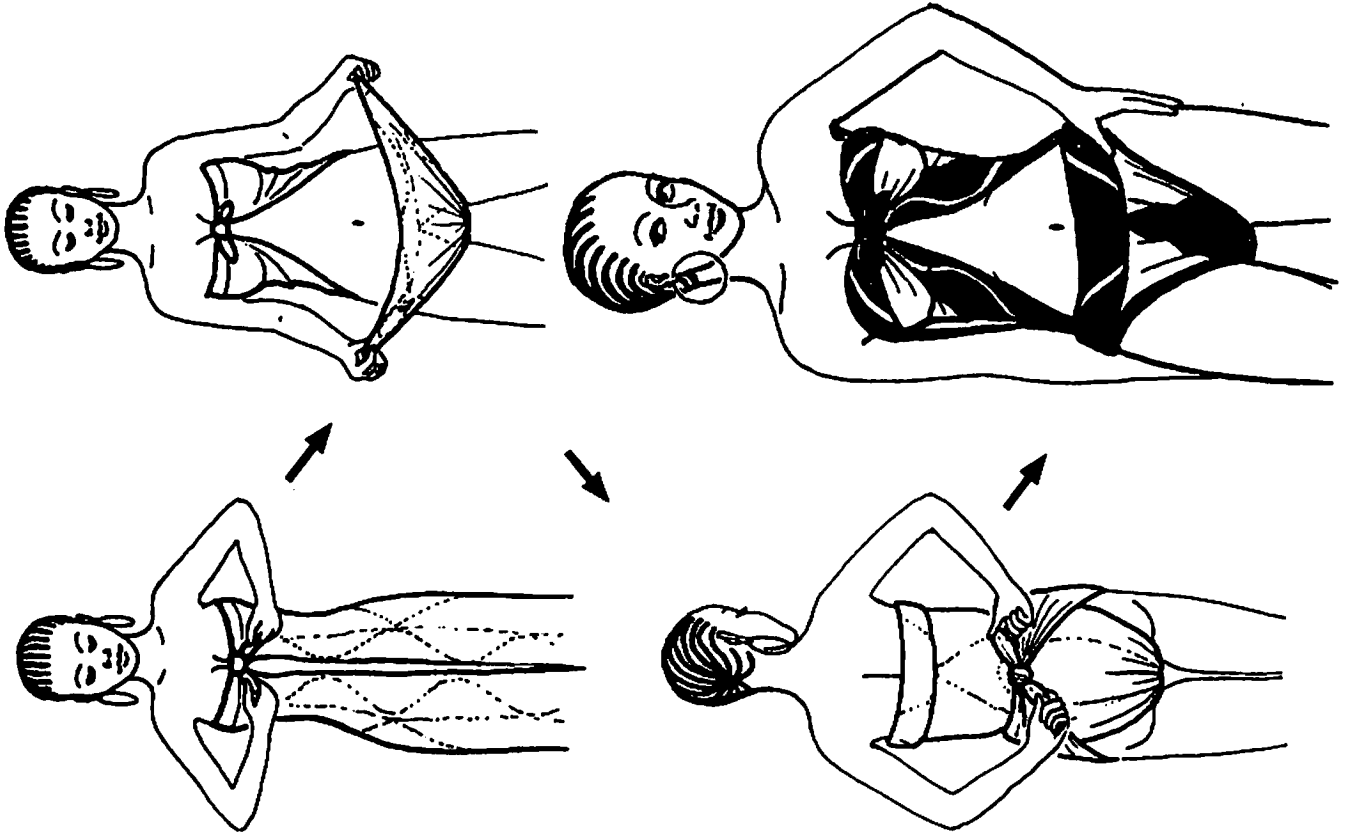
Wear like this,
or with belt.

29. Sun/swimsuit I

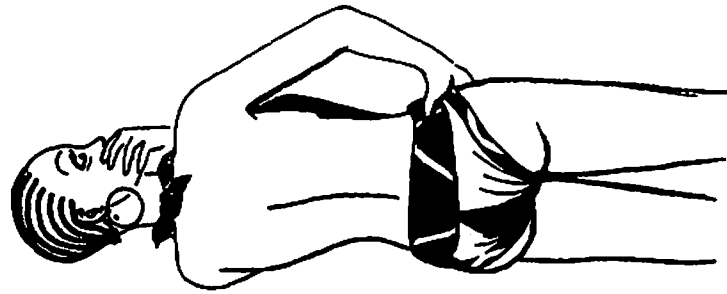
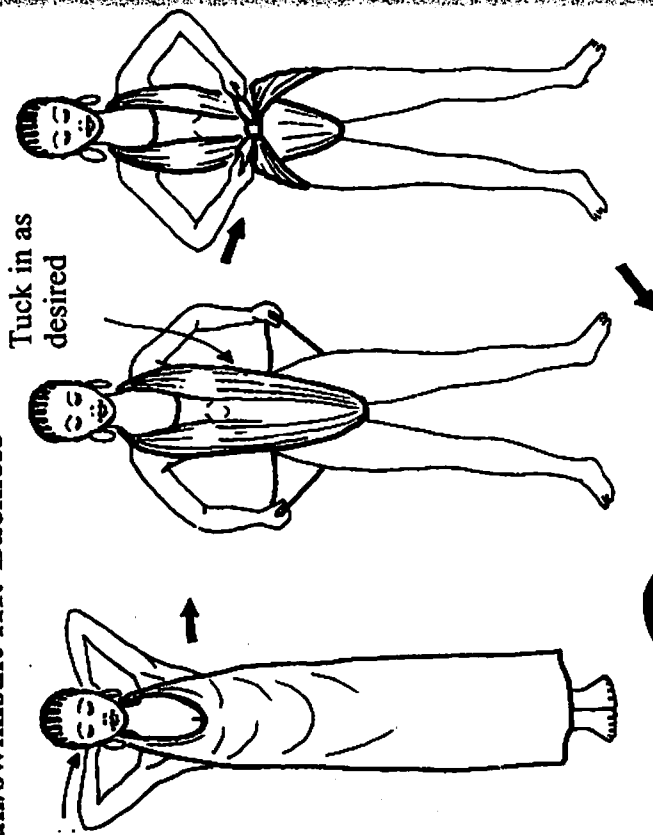


This style, and the next, need careful tucking in order to work.

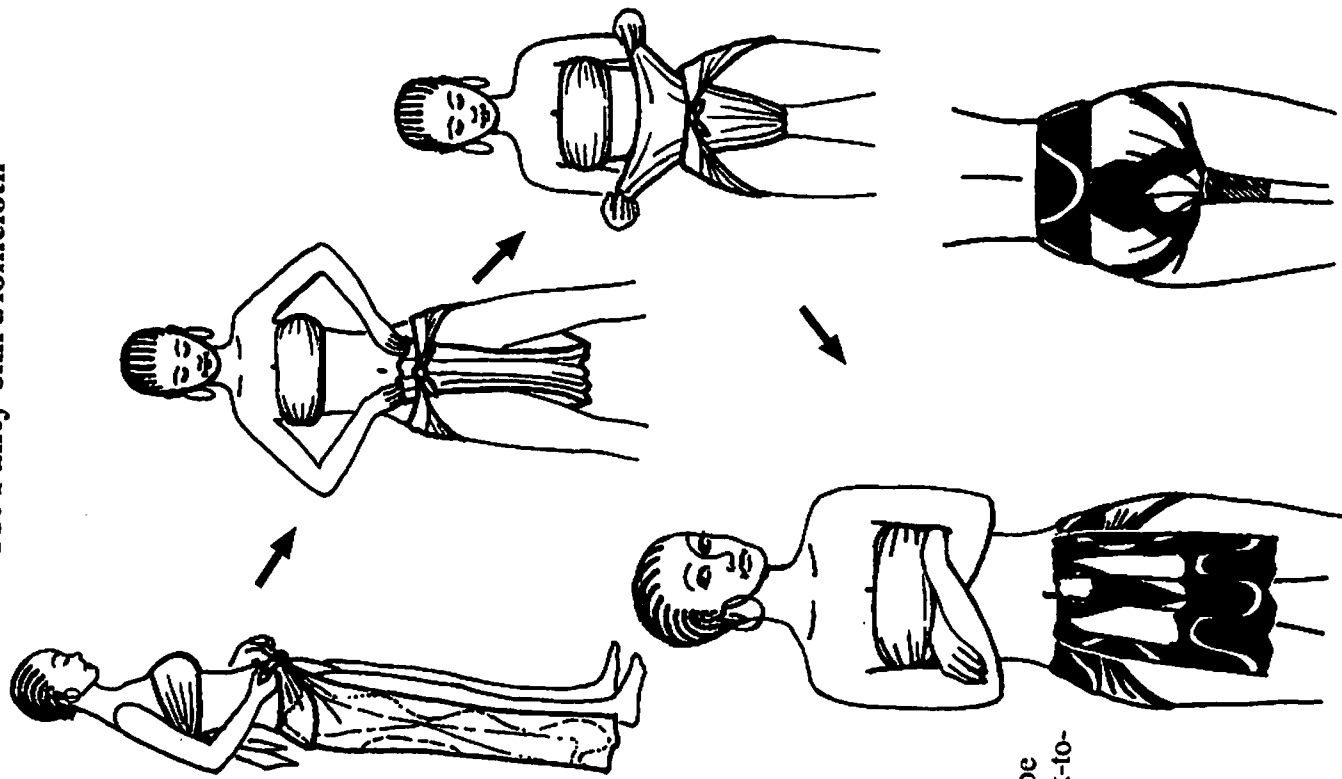
30. Sun/swimsuit II



31. Sun/swimsuit III: Backless



33. Panty-skirt/loincloth

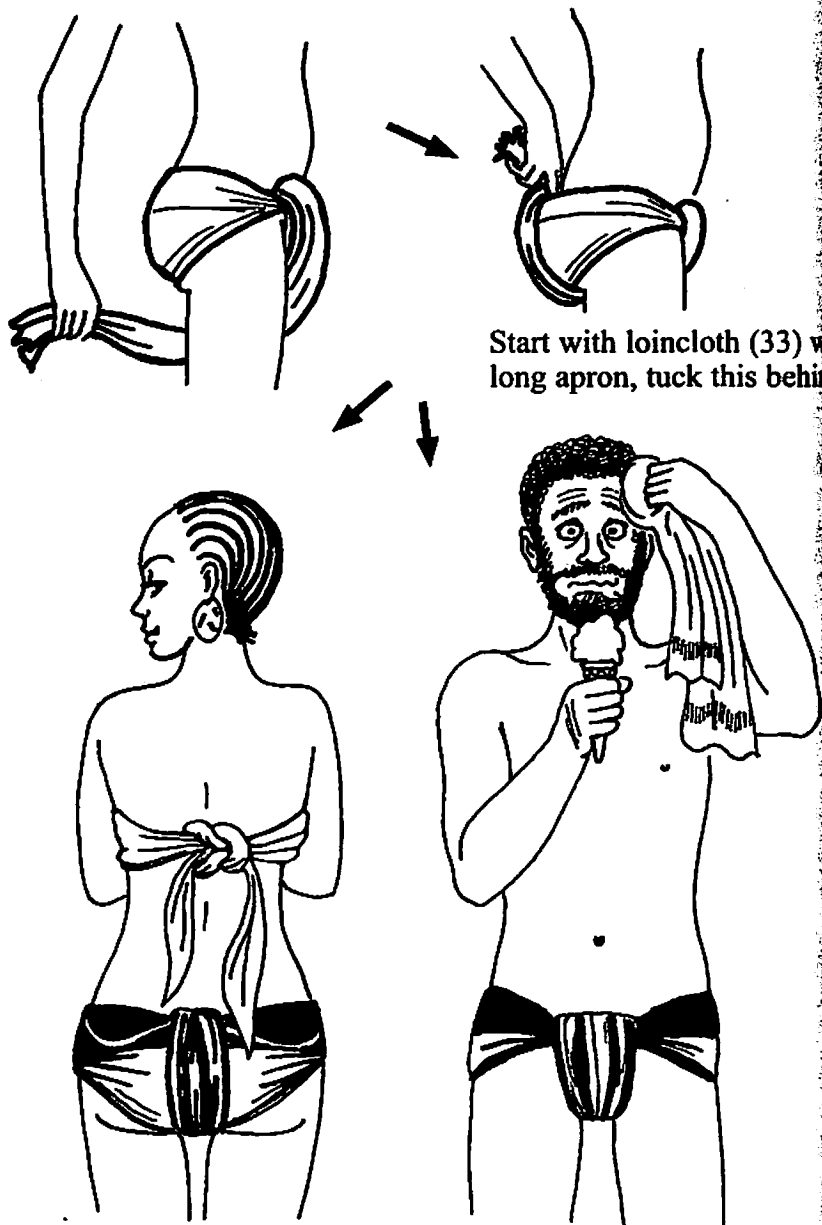


so can be
from back-to-
front.

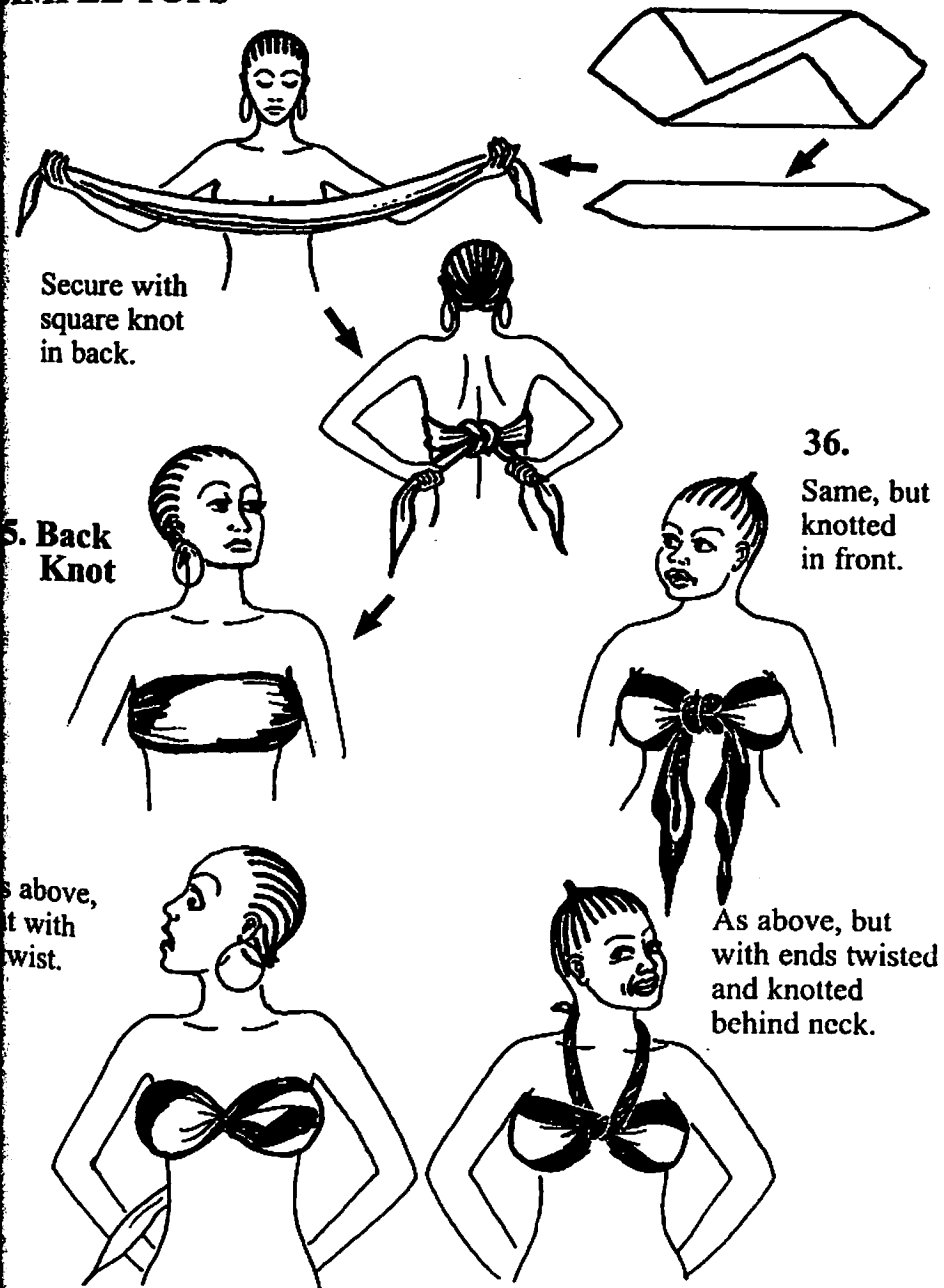
32. Same, with skirt



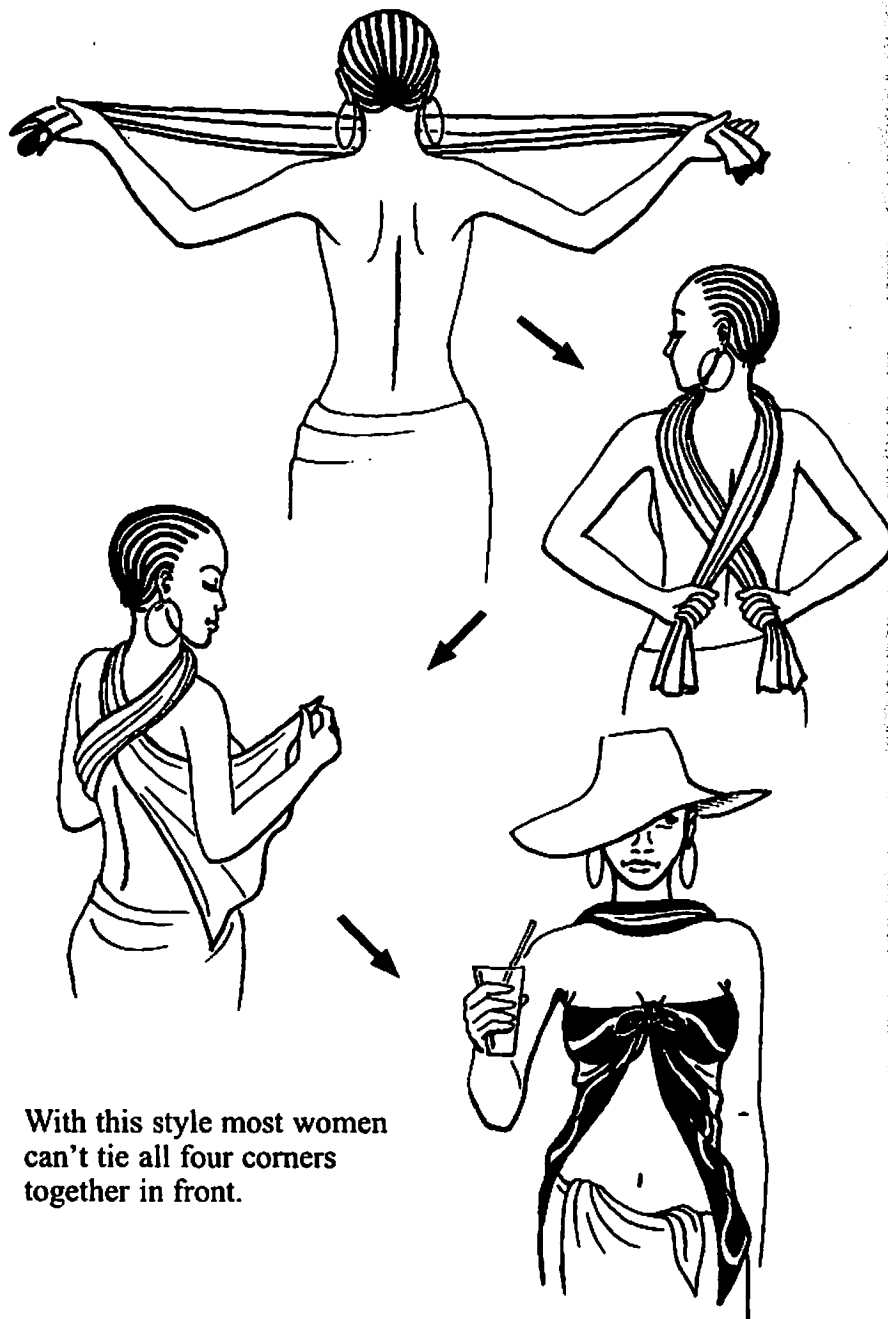
34. Brief bottom



SIMPLE TOPS

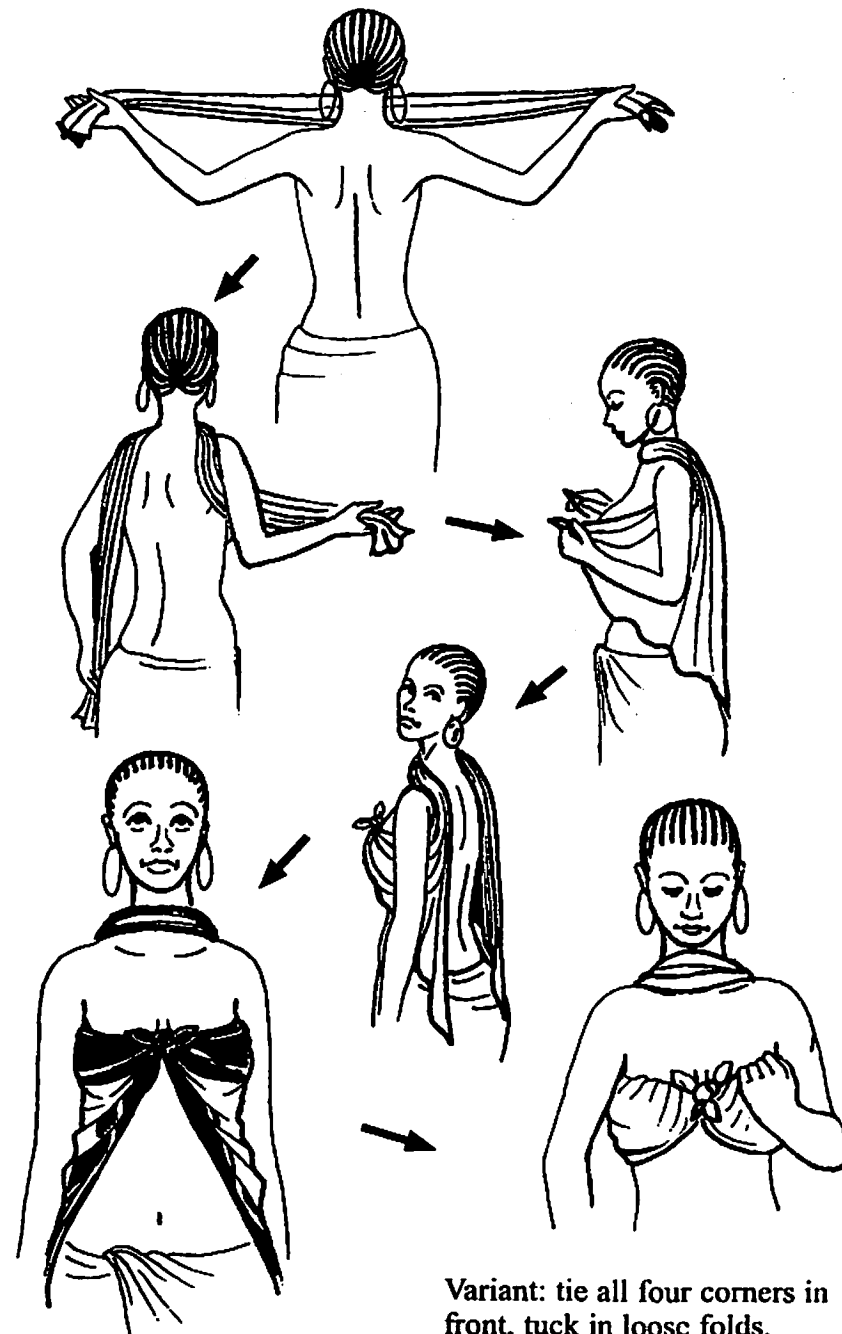


37. Halter I: Back cross



With this style most women can't tie all four corners together in front.

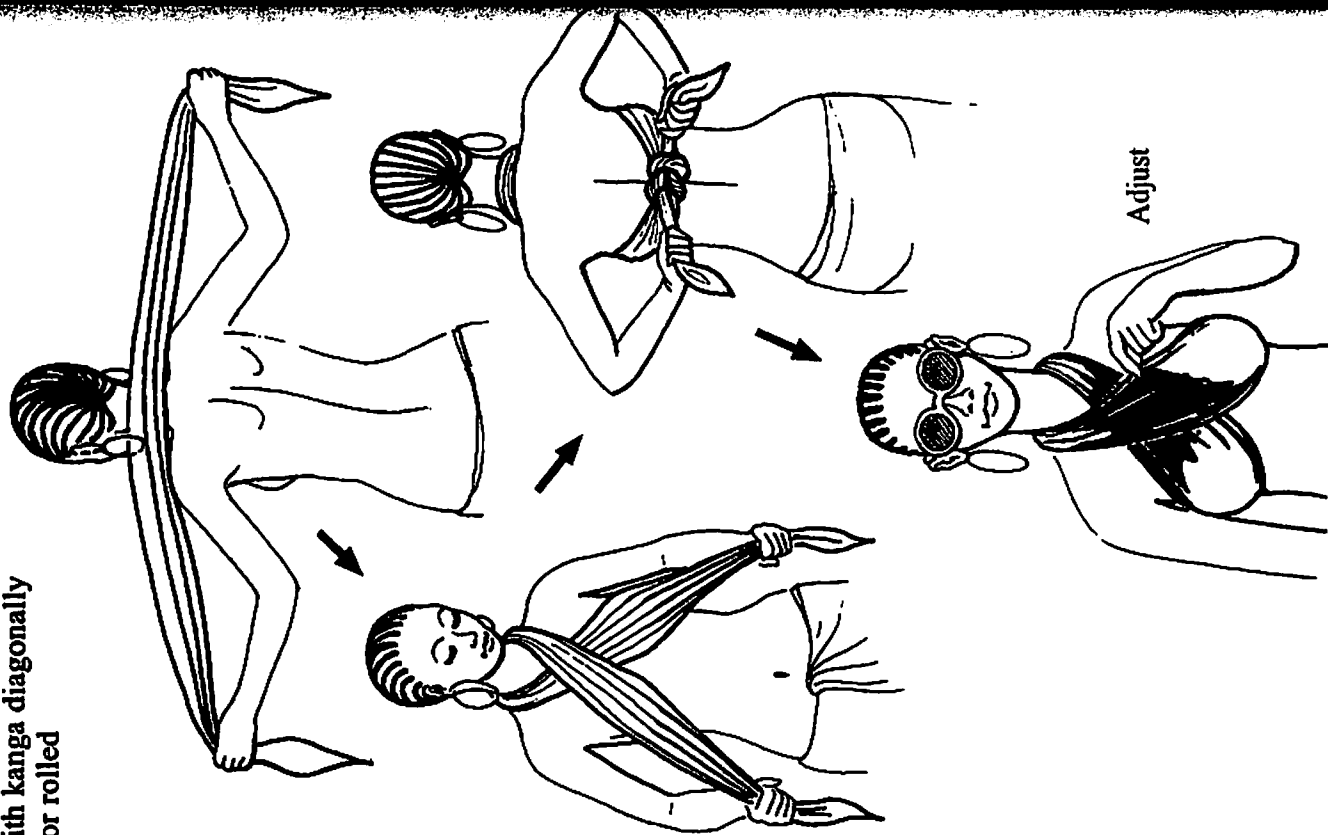
38. Halter II: Uncrossed



Variant: tie all four corners in front, tuck in loose folds.

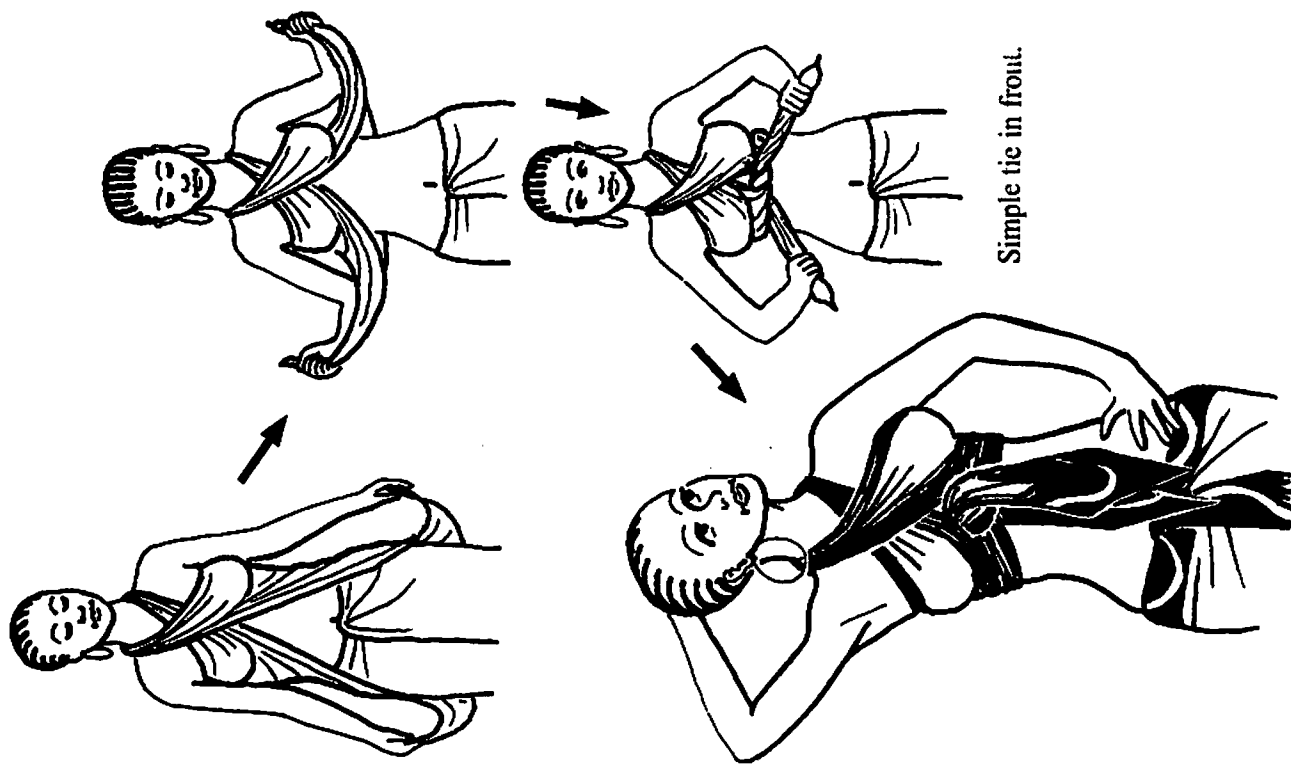
39. Halter III: Front cross

Start with kanga diagonally folded or rolled



Adjust

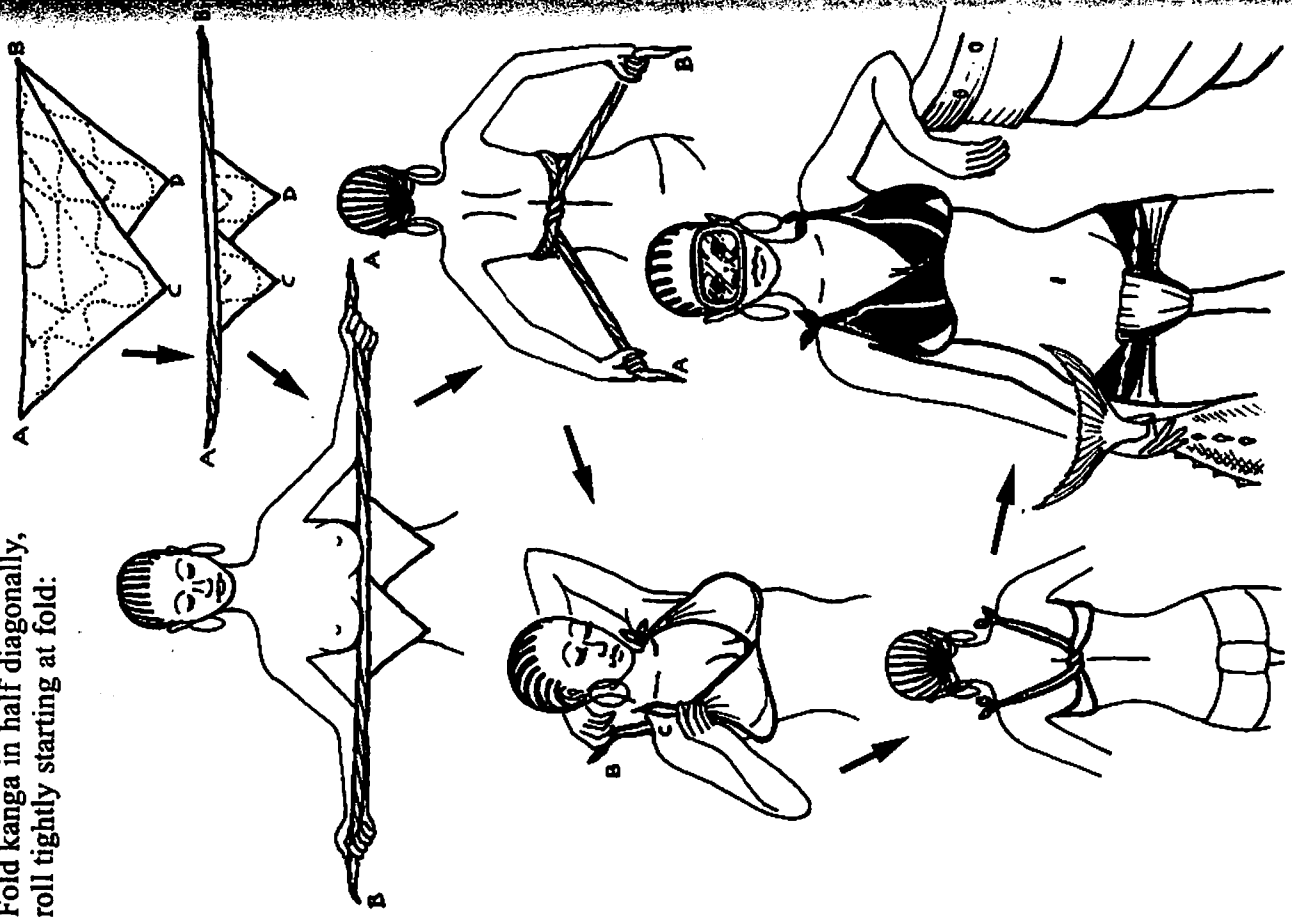
40. Neck Knot Halter



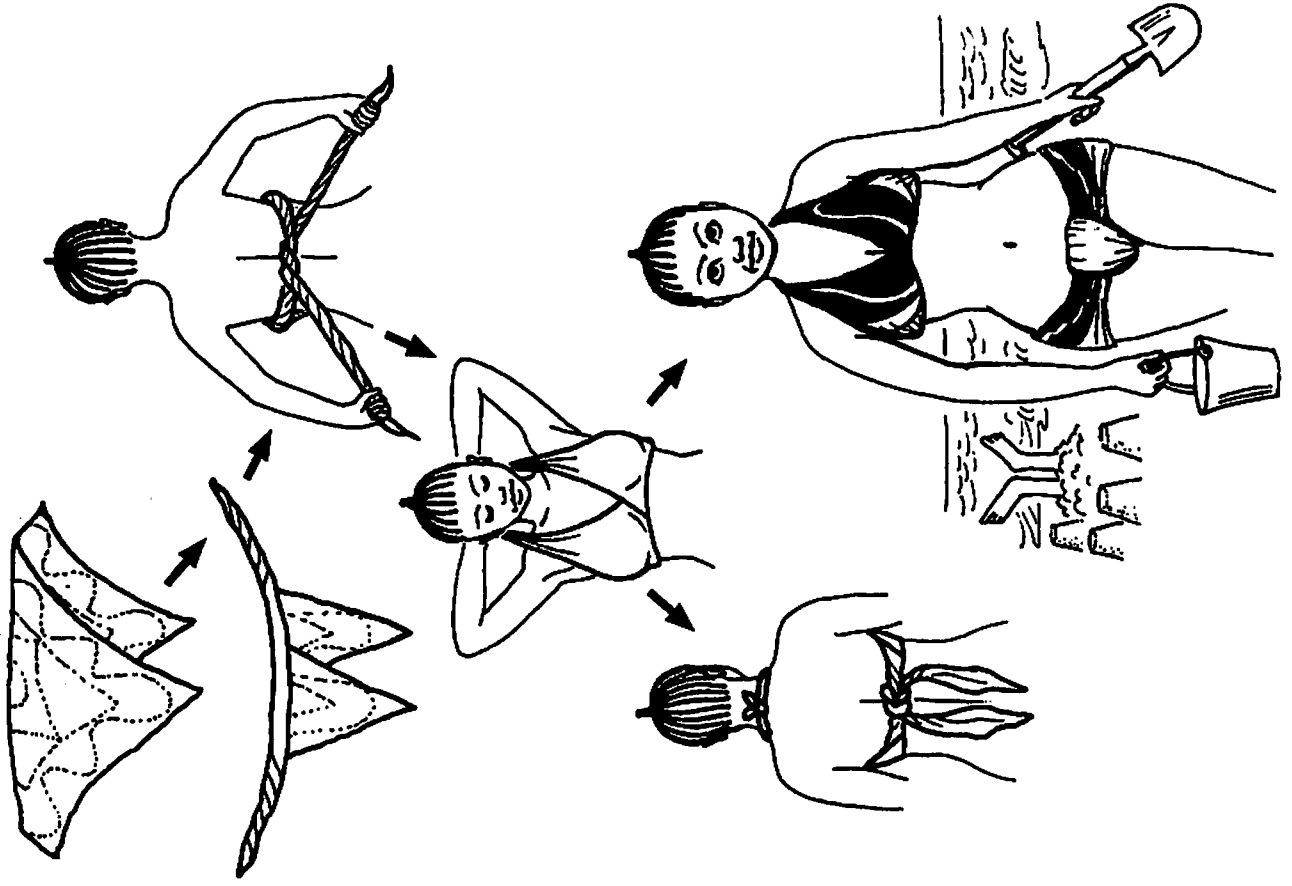
Simple tie in front.

41. Bra I: Shoulder Knot

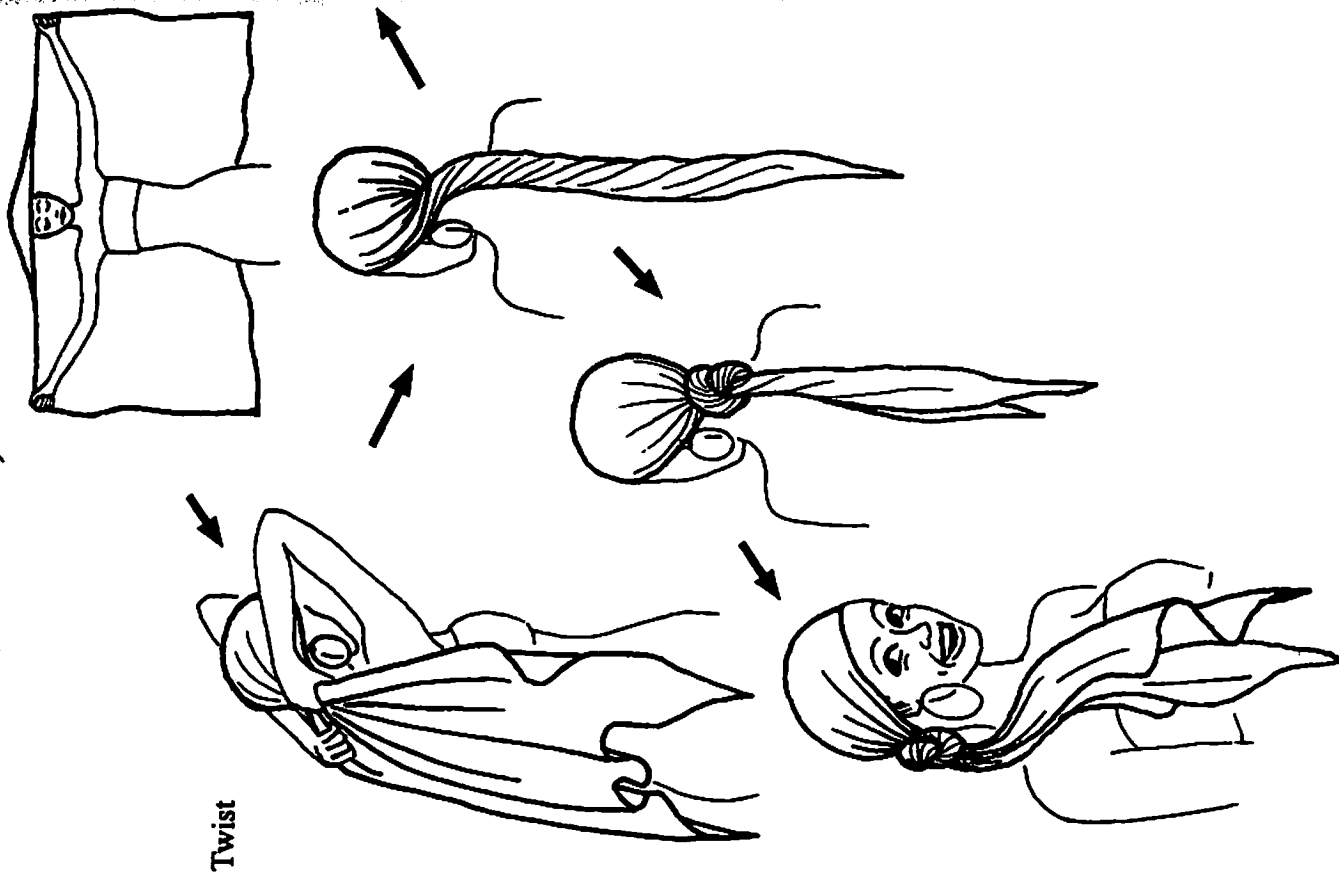
Fold kanga in half diagonally, roll tightly starting at fold:



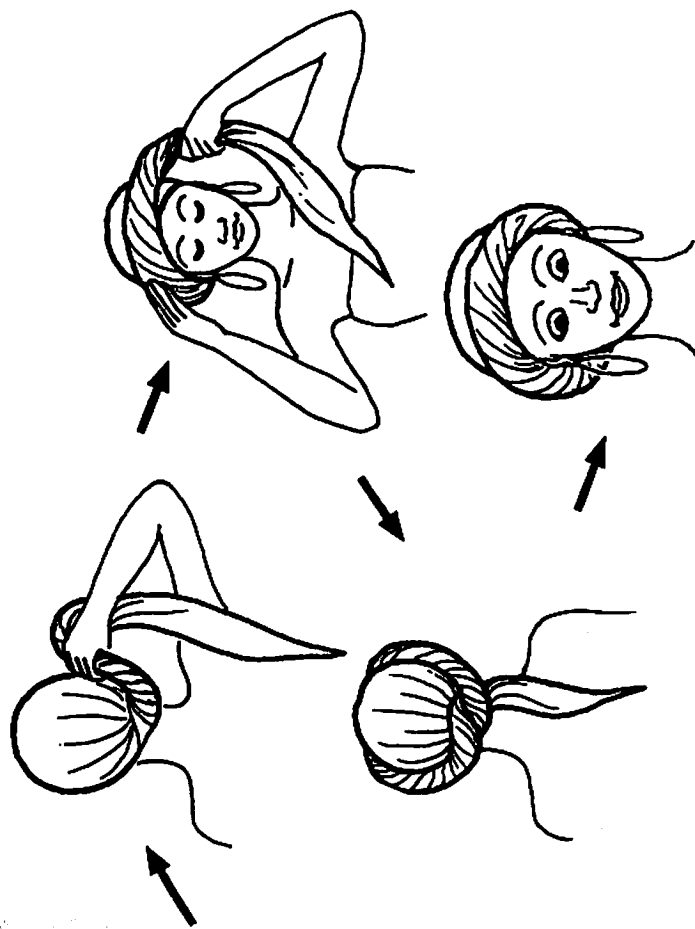
2. Bra I: Neck Knot



43. Headscarf (knotted tail)

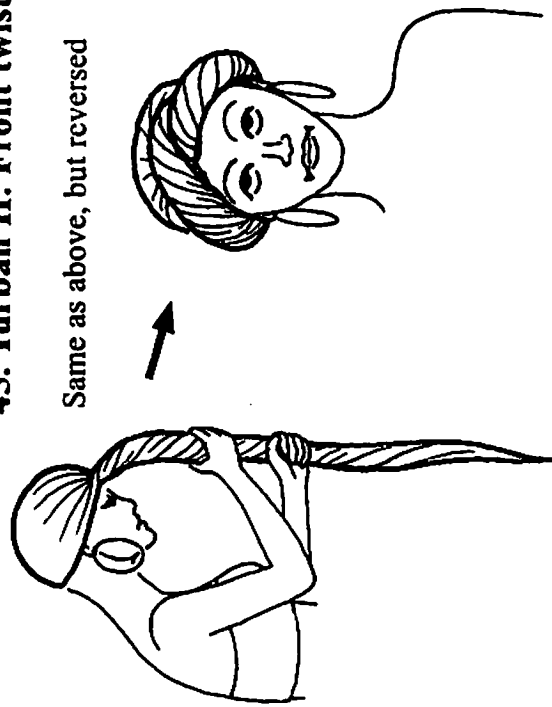


4. Turban I: Back twist

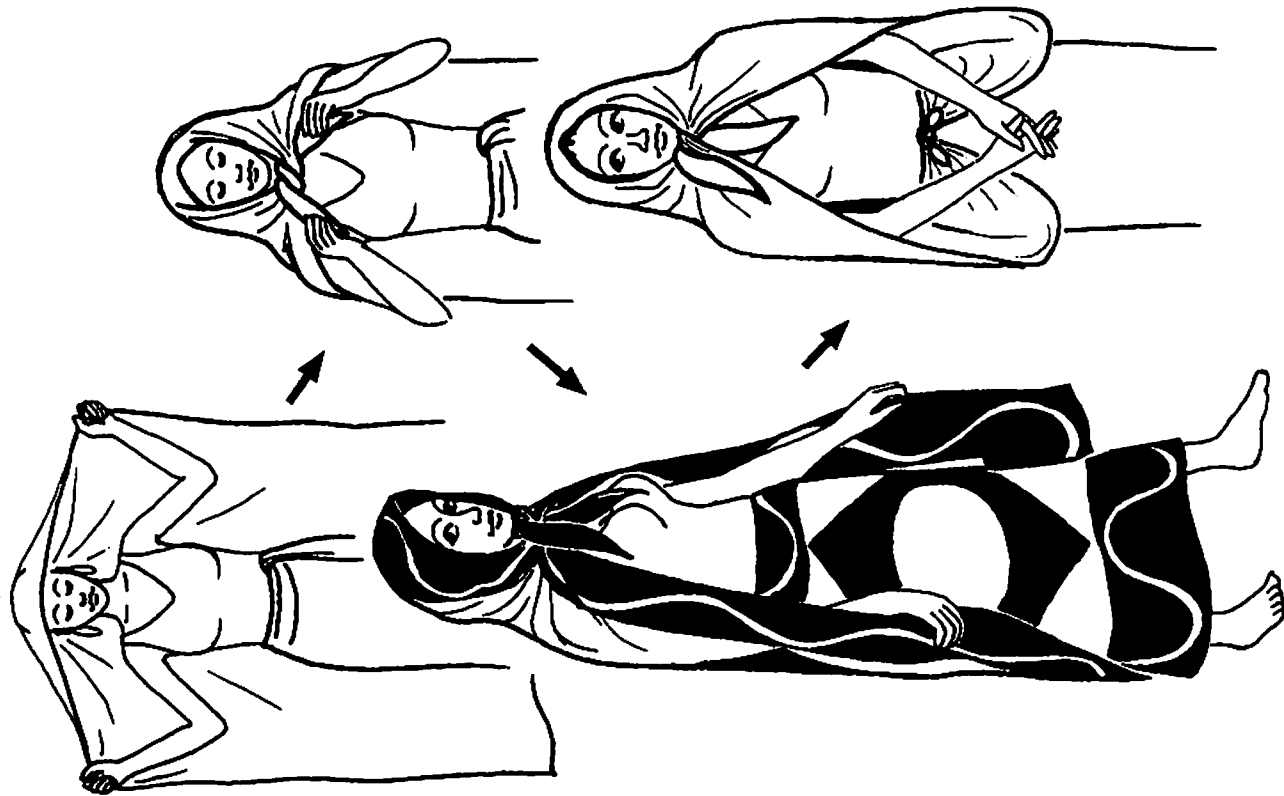


45. Turban II: Front twist

Same as above, but reversed

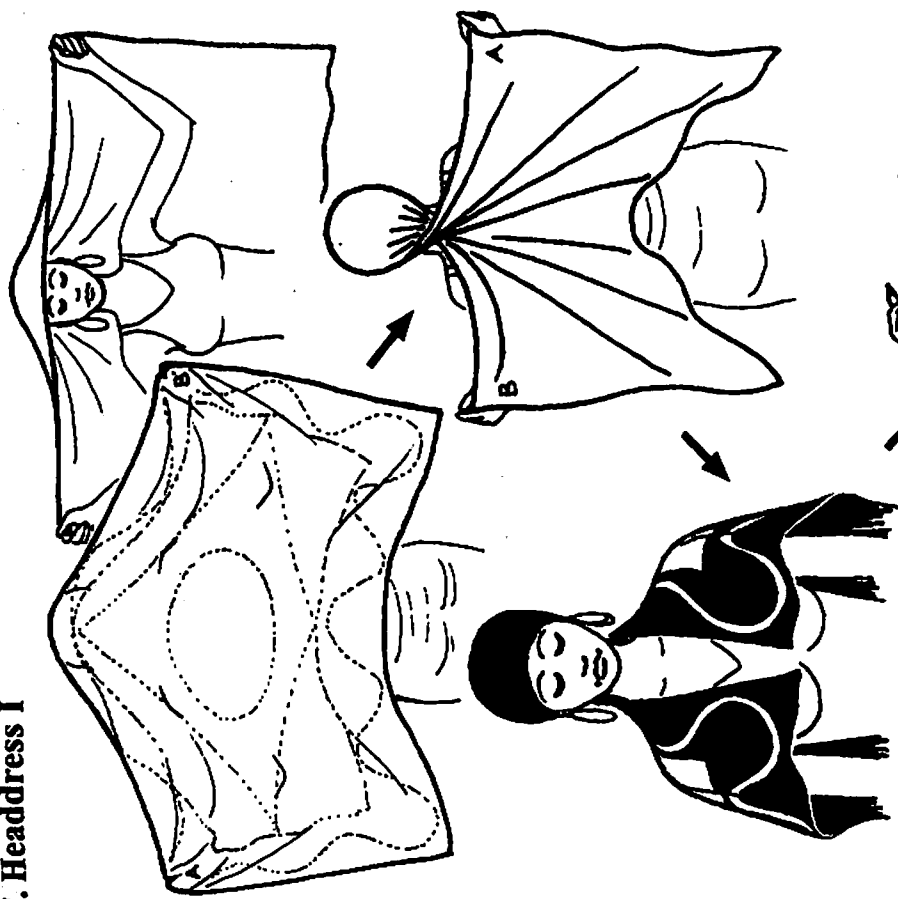


46. Cape and Hood

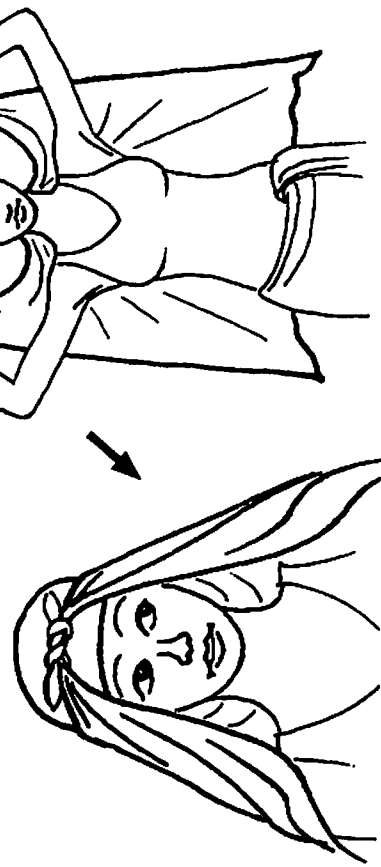


60

47. Headdress I



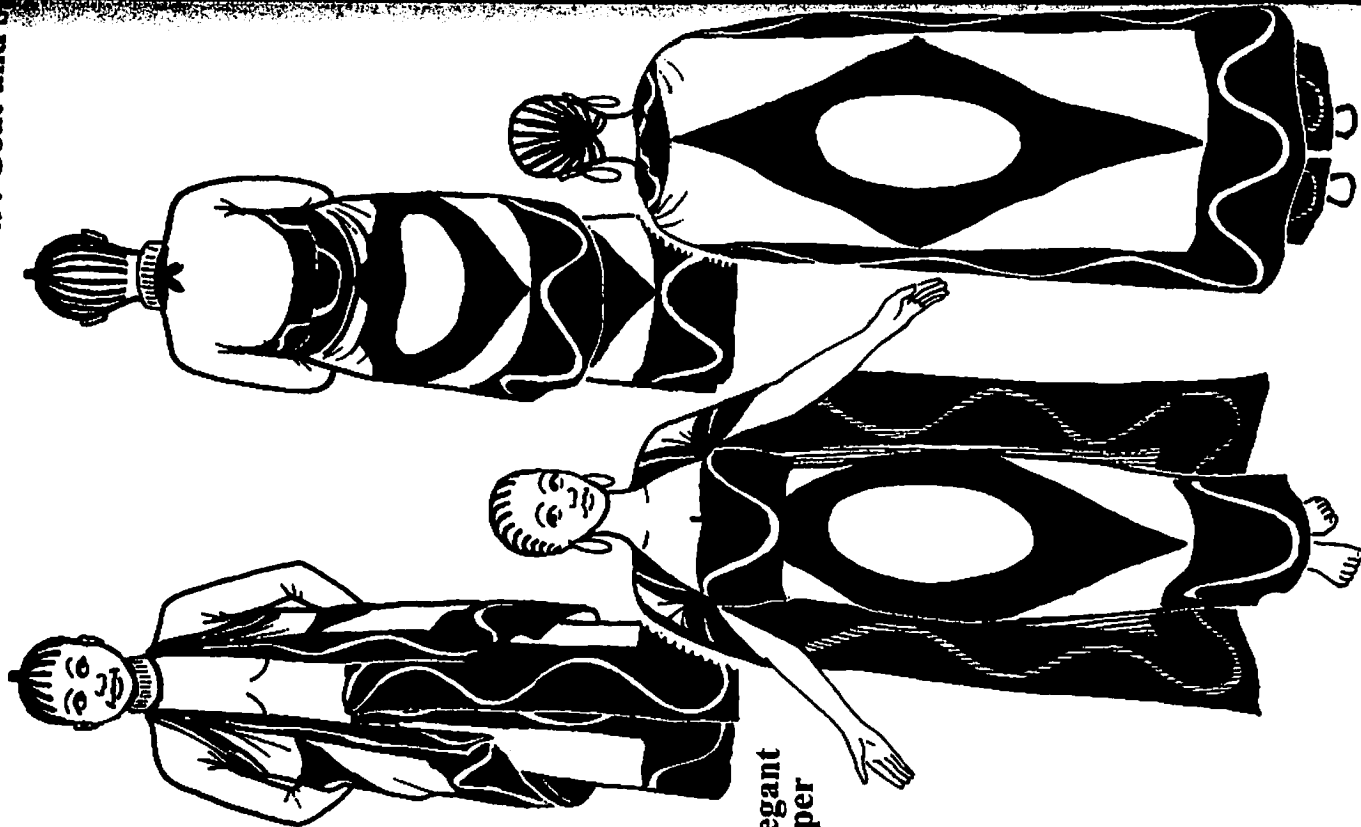
48. Headdress II ("Sheik")



61

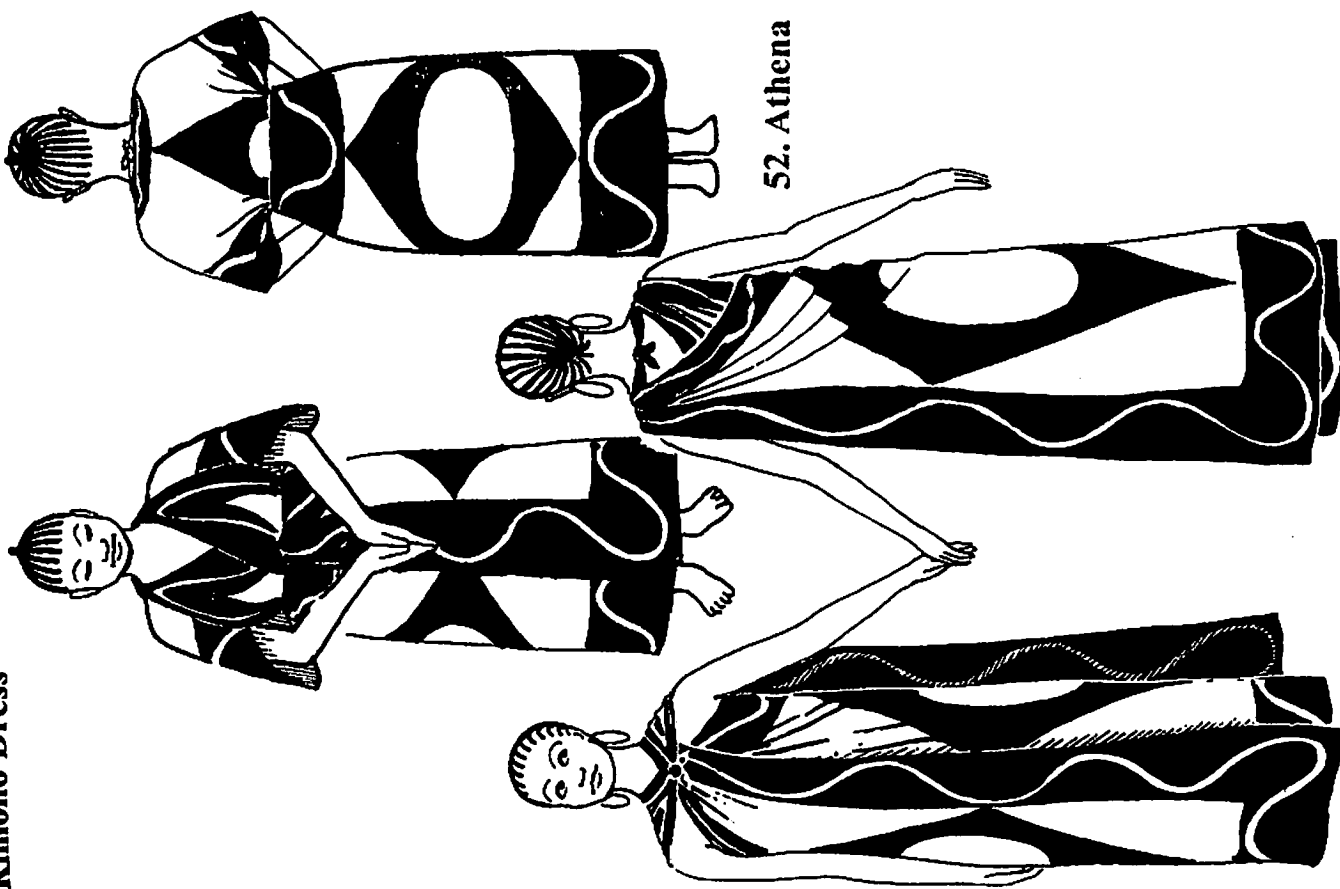
"YOU FIGURE IT OUT"

49. Coat and Skirt



50. Elegant
Caper

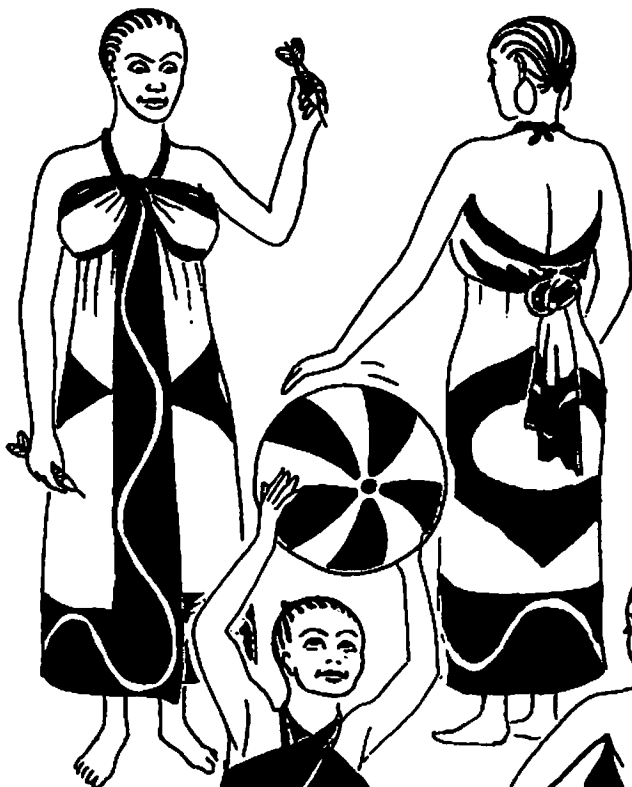
62



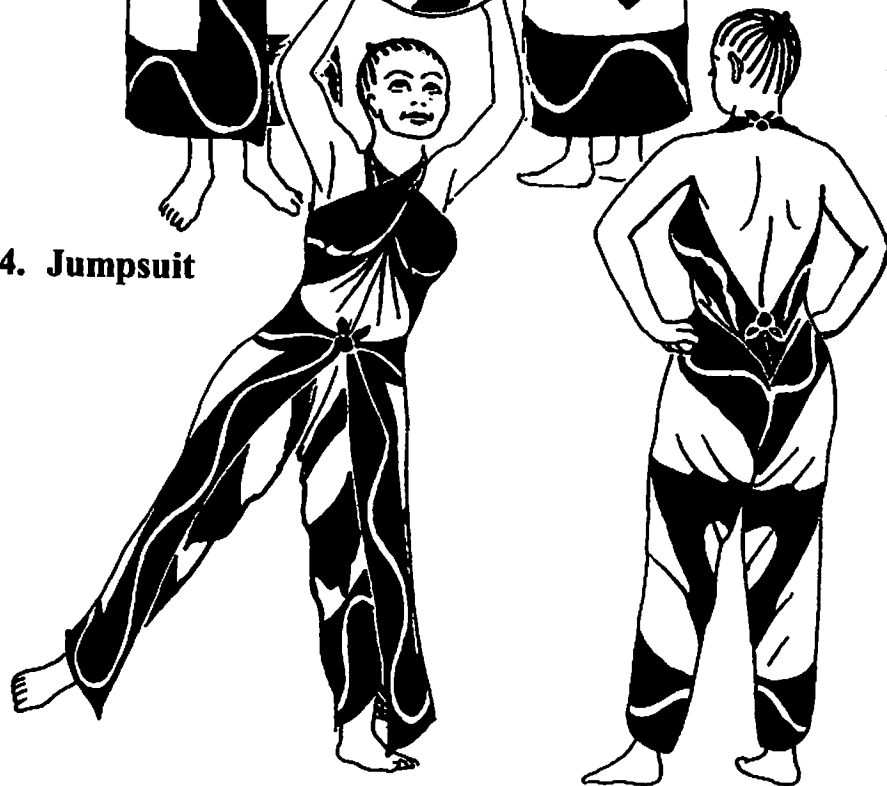
52. Athena

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53. "Empire" sundress



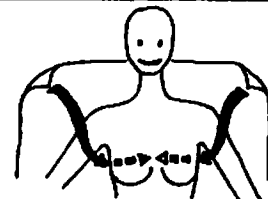
54. Jumpsuit



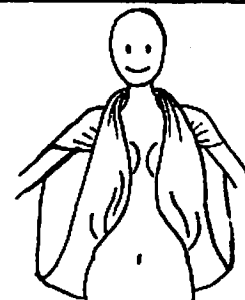
Hints for "You Figure It Out" styles

49: Easy - skirt style 2, top as shown.
Wear it over a bikini/blouse/sweater.

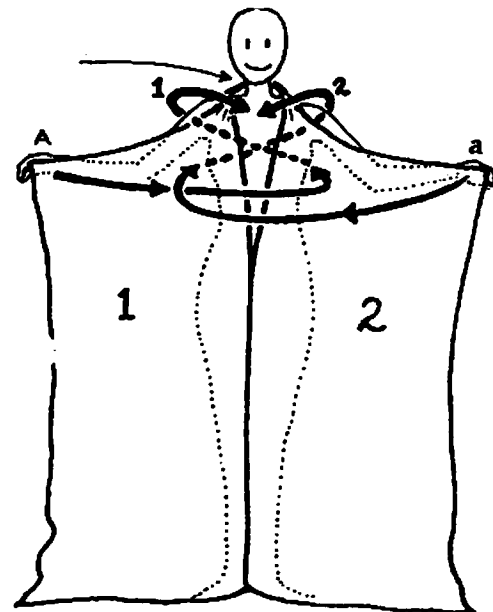
50: Similar to elegant Ensemble 25, but pull
top corners of cape forwards and down
over shoulders, under arms, and knot
behind back



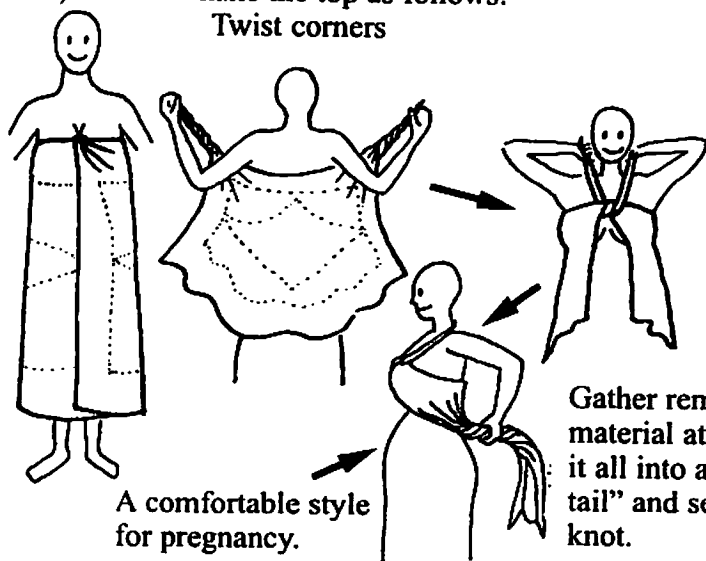
51: i) Start with cape as above. Pick up
bottom corners and knot them
behind neck. Arrange front folds
to suit. To hold them in place:
ii) Tie second kanga as in skirt style 2
with centre tuck, tightly around
hanging folds of first kanga.



52: i) Knot behind neck.
ii) Wrap kanga 1 as
shown. Hold
corner "A" in
teeth!
iii) Wrap kanga 2
as shown



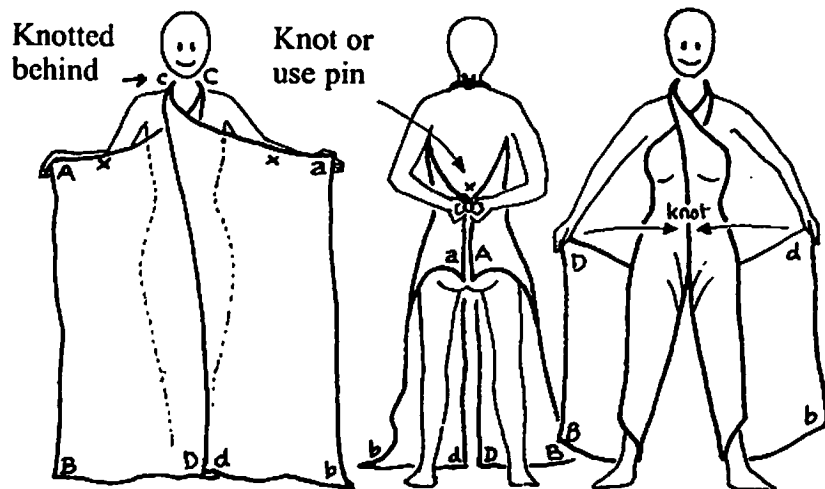
- 53: i) Start with shift style 1, with centre tuck
 ii) Then make the top as follows:
 Twist corners



Simple tie in front; knot behind neck

Gather remaining loose material at back, twist it all into a single "pony tail" and secure with a knot.

54: These clues show how it's done. The only tricky bit is knotting the edges together at "x" behind back. Success depends mainly on adjustment. Best for small people.



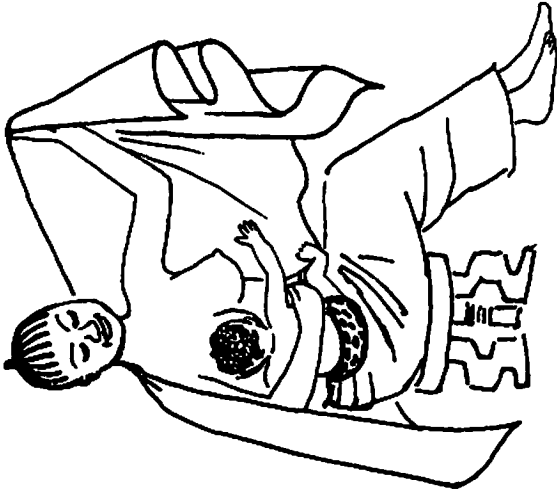
Looks best with kangas that have no bold central design - unlike our drawing!

OTHER USES OF KANGAS...



55. Traditional Baby Carrier

56. Diapers



57. Nursing Tent



58. Sling for Weighing and Carrying

